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Hindu marriage invalid without ceremony, says SC

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

A Hindu marriage is not an event for "song and dance", "wining and dining" or a commercial transaction, Supreme Court has observed and said it cannot be recognised in the "absence of a valid ceremony" under the Hindu Marriage Act.

A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Augustine George Masih said a Hindu marriage is a 'samskara' and a sacrament which has to be accorded its status as an institution of great value in Indian society.

In its recent order passed in the matter of two trained commercial pilots, who sought a divorce decree without performing a valid Hindu marriage ceremony, the bench urged young men and women to "think deeply about the institution of marriage even before they enter upon it".

The bench said a Hindu marriage facilitates procreation and consolidates the unit of family.

In its 19 April order, the bench said where a Hindu marriage is not performed with ceremonies such as 'saptapadi' (taking seven steps by the groom and the bride before the sacred fire), the marriage will not be construed as a Hindu marriage.

- The Act that came into force on 18 May, 1955, encompasses not only Hindus as such but also Lingayats, Brahmos, Aryasamajists, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs.

It added that monogamy is the only legally approved form of relationship between a husband and a wife.

The Act that came into force on 18 May, 1955, encompasses not only Hindus as such but also Lingayats, Brahmos, Aryasamajists, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs.

It added, mere issuance of a certificate in the absence of the ceremonies would not confirm marital status. Marriage registration is a proof of a wedding in a disputed case. However, if there has been no marriage in accordance with Section 7, the registration does not confer legitimacy to the marriage.

Under Article 142, the court held the estranged couple's marriage certificate in absence of valid ceremony under Hindu Marriage Act as null and void. It also quashed their divorce proceedings and a dowry case lodged against the husband and his family members. *—PTI*

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Heatwave alert in K'taka, 6 dists to burn at 46°C

Heatwave in Bagalkot, Belagavi, Dharwad, Koppal till 9 May

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

A red alert denoting severe heatwave has been issued for Bagalkote, Belagavi, Dharwad, Gadag, Haveri and Koppal by the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC). According to KSNDMC, temperatures are likely to cross 46 degrees Celsius between 1 May and 9 May. KSNDMC has quoted SHAR-ISRO as its source.

The monitoring centre also pointed out that when comparing the maximum temperature recorded in Karnataka in the past seven years – between 2017 and 2024 – 30 April, 2024 recorded the highest, 45.6 degrees Celsius.

Meanwhile, in a statement released by India Meteorological Department in Bengaluru, the trough/wind discontinuity from southeast Madhya Pradesh to South Interior Karnataka (SIK), across Vidarbha, Marathawada and North Interior Karnataka (NIK) extending up to 1.5km above mean sea level persists.

But as per IMD, the department issued a severe heat (red) alert only when the actual maximum temperature crosses 47 degrees Celsius.

The maximum temperatures are likely to continue and also be around 40 to 46 degrees Celsius over parts of NIK districts, such as Raichur, Kalaburagi, Yadgir, Ballari and Vijayapura till 6 May.

April recorded the highest temperature in last 7 years *PHOTO: PTI*

The remaining NIK districts, most of the SIK districts and Dakshina Kannada district are likely to experience maximum temperature between 40 and 44 degrees Celsius, it added.

Parts of Kodagu, Udupi, Hassan, Shivamogga, Chikkamagaluru and parts of Uttara Kannada districts are likely to experience between 33 and 40 degrees Celsius till May 6, according to the centre.

From 7 May, maximum temperatures are likely to come down by 2 to 3 degrees Celsius across the state, according to KSNDMC. Meanwhile, as per realised rainfall across the state data by KSNDMC, while isolated rains were observed in six districts -- Haveri, Dharwad, Gadag, Vijayapura, Shivamogga and Uttara Kannada -- dry/negligible rains were received in 25 districts, including Bengaluru.

Bengaluru City recorded its second hottest day in May after the maximum temperature touched 38.1 degrees Celsius on Wednesday. The IMD observatory at Kempegowda International Airport recorded its hottest day ever with a maximum temperature of 39.2 degrees Celsius. *—PTI*

Dos and don'ts during heatwave

DOS:-

- Drink plenty of lukewarm water throughout the day
- Wear loose, light-coloured clothing
- Take frequent breaks in air-conditioned spaces if possible
- Apply sunscreen before stepping out of the house
- Consume more fruits and vegetables

DON'TS:-

- Consume large quantities of cold water immediately after spending time outdoors in extreme heat
- Engage in strenuous activity during 12 pm to 4 pm, which is the hottest part of the day
- Drink caffeine and alcohol
- Skip meals
- Consume heavy meals

PHOTO: PTI

B'luru student tries to open flight emergency door

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

A 22-year-old engineering student was taken into police custody after allegedly attempting to open an emergency exit door on a flight from Kolkata to Bengaluru on 1 May. Karthik Karan, a first-time air traveller, was visiting Bengaluru to meet a friend during his vacation. When cabin crew members noticed his suspicious behaviour, they apprehended him. Upon landing at Kempegowda International Airport, Karan was handed over to airport security and arrested by Bengaluru International Airport Police. He faces charges under Section 336 (act endangering human life or safety of others) of Indian Penal Code. In his statement to police, Karan denied attempting to open the emergency door, claiming he had merely held onto the handle to stand up and exit the aircraft.
—Salar News

Australia sidesteps reports it expelled Indian spies

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Australian government has talked up its close ties with Delhi despite reports that two Indian spies were expelled from the country in 2020. In 2021, Australia's intelligence chief said that foreign agents had been operating locally in the previous year - but he did not say their nationality. Australia has not confirmed or denied those reports but says it is keen to counter foreign interference. "I don't propose to get into those stories," Treasurer Jim Chalmers told ABC on Wednesday."We have got a good relationship with India... It's an important economic relationship. It's become closer in recent years as a consequence of efforts on both sides." ABC reported that a group of Indian agents had targeted classified information on Australian trade, security, and defence projects. Indian High Commission in Canberra has not responded to a request for comment.In recent years, Australia and India have sought to deepen ties via a string of agreements targeting trade, energy and migration. In recent years, Australia and India have sought to deepen ties via a string of agreements targeting trade, energy and migration.
—BBC News

Truth will prevail: Prajwal on 'sex scandal'

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

Hassan MP and Lok Sabha election candidate of BJP-JD(S) alliance Prajwal Revanna, who is facing an inquiry over the alleged sexual abuse of several women, said the truth will prevail.

The MP, who left the country as soon as the election to his constituency ended, has also sought seven days' time to appear before the Special Investigation Team (SIT) formed by the Karnataka to inquire into the huge cache of about 3,000 explicit videos and photos allegedly pertaining to him, which have gone viral on social media.

Prajwal Revanna *PHOTO: PTI*

"As I am not in Bengaluru to attend the enquiry, I have communicated to CID Bangalore through my advocate," Prajwal, grandson of former prime minister and JD(S) patriarch HD Deve Gowda, said in a post.

'SIT to take Prajwal into custody from KIA'

SIT will take take Prajwal into custody as soon as he lands at the Bengaluru International Airport, sources said on Wednesday.

Sources said that Prajwal booked a ticket back to Bengaluru from Frankfurt (Germany) and will land at the Kempegowda International Airport on 3 May evening.

He is planning to appear before the SIT authorities on 4 May. The sources stated that he is most likely to be picked up from the airport.
—Salar News

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HANG'S SELF IN TOILET

Salman house firing accused dies in police custody

MUMBAI, 1 MAY

A 32-year-old man arrested in the case related to the firing outside Bollywood actor Salman Khan's residence allegedly hanged himself in the police lock-up on Wednesday, an official said.

Anuj Thapan, the deceased, was accused of supplying weapons to the shooters who opened fire outside Khan's residence in Bandra on 14 April and arrested by the Mumbai crime branch.

He hanged himself with a piece of bed sheet in the toilet of the first-floor lock-up, located in the crime branch's building inside the police commissioner's office compound in south Mumbai.

The incident came to light at 1pm when a crime branch official noticed that Thapan was in the toilet for a long time.

He was rushed to the nearby state-run Gokuldas Tejpal hospital where he was declared dead. There were five other accused in the lock-up at the time of the incident. Thapan and Sonu Kumar Bishnoi, 32, were arrested by a crime branch team from Fazilka in Punjab on 26 April. The two had allegedly supplied weapons to shooters Sagar Pal and Vicky Gupta for firing at Salman Khan's residence. As per the police, the duo visited Panvel near Mumbai on 15 March to deliver two country-made pistols and 38 live rounds to Pal and Gupta. Thapan and Sonu's village in Punjab is very close to jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi's village. Lawrence, currently lodged in Sabarmati central prison in Ahmedabad, and his younger brother Anmol Bishnoi who is believed to be in the US or Canada, have been named in the firing case. *—PTI*

Anuj Thapan *PHOTO: PTI*

Moosewala's accused Brar shot dead in US

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Goldy Brar, gangster, and mastermind in Sidhu Moosewala murder case was allegedly shot dead by rival Dalla Lakhbhir gang at Hotel Fairmount in Calafornia in US, on Tuesday.

Brar was standing outside his residence with a companion when attackers opened fire before fleeing the scene.

Arsh Dalla and Lakbhir, allegedly have been reported to have taken credit for the attack, due to their historical enmity.

He was born in Muktsar Sahib, Punjab, in 1994. Also known as Satwinderjit Singh, he was a Canadian-born BA graduate who worked remotely from there in Punjab. Brar reportedly took over operations of Lawrence Bishnoi, a jailed gangster in India. These operations included contract killing, and extortion rackets in India, among other offenses. In 2022, an Interpol notice was issued against him and he reportedly moved to the United States. *—Salar News*

Goldy Brar *PHOTO: X@GHARKEKALESH*

BJP won't back crimes against women: Shah

HUBBALLI, 1 MAY

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said BJP cannot remain with those who commit atrocities against women, referring to sexual abuse allegations against JD(S) Lok Sabha poll candidate Prajwal Revanna.

He said Congress is in power in the State and it should have taken action. "You did not initiate any action till the elections in Vokkaliga belt were over. You did politics and allowed him (Prajwal Revanna) to escape. If you have guts tell the truth. Because of you, a heinous criminal fled the country," Shah said.

He accused Chief Minister Siddaramaiah of politicising the drought relief issue. Referring to Rameswaram Cafe blast, Shah alleged that soon after Congress came to power, a blast took place in Bengaluru City, which the Siddaramaiah government initially called as cylinder explosion.

Shah meets Neha's dad

Shah met Congress Councillor Niranjan Hiremath and assured justice for his daughter Neha who was stabbed to death inside her college campus last month. The 23-year-old Neha was stabbed to death by her former classmate Fayaz Khodunaik on the campus of her college in Dharwad on 18 April.
—PTI

ISIS ANGLE SUSPECTED

100 Delhi schools get 'hoax' bomb threats

NEW DELHI/NOIDA, 1 MAY

In a scare of unprecedented scale, at least 100 schools in the Delhi NCR area received an identical bomb threat by email early Wednesday, triggering mass evacuations and massive searches as panicked parents rushed to pick up their children.

The threat was declared a hoax as "nothing objectionable" was found during searches, police said.

Police sources said that the email schools received had the same source, suspected to be sent from Russia aimed at creating panic.

The anti-terror unit of Delhi Police has started investigations as the initial probe hinted at a deeper conspiracy by a terror group during the Lok Sabha elections.

Students board a bus outside Mother Mary's School in Mayur Vihar, after multiple schools received bomb threat, in New Delhi *PHOTO: PTI*

They added that it is also possible that culprits may have masked their identity using the dark net.

An official said that DFS also received calls even after noon and firefighters are still on the ground.

Multiple private schools in Noida, Greater Noida, Ghaziabad and Gurugram also received the bomb threat but local police dismissed them as hoax. The bomb threat was received in 24 private schools in east Delhi, 18 schools in south Delhi, 21 schools in west Delhi and 10 schools in Shahdara.

Sources in Delhi police have revealed that the email contained the word 'Swaraiim' (clashing of the swords) which is an Arabic word used by the Islamic State since 2014. The officer said that the email also contained "aayate (verses) of the holy Quran".
—PTI

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

2 suspended for neglecting election duty in Vijayapura

VIJAYAPURA, 1 MAY

The district election officer suspended two government school teachers for their alleged dereliction of duty during the Lok Sabha elections. Deputy Commissioner Bhubalan, also the District Election Officer, suspended Bharata Bhimappa Gadeda, a teacher at Abbihal Government Senior Primary School in Basavana Bagevadi; and RI Mulla, a teacher at Halagode Government Senior Primary School in Talikoti. Gadeda refused to comply with orders and obtain an assignment order for election duty. Furthermore, he left the election centre without proper authorisation. He allegedly went to Pune, after which his phone was unreachable. Similarly, Mulla failed to report to school on the designated day but also disregarded instructions from a higher official receive a copy of the order.—*Salar News*

PHOTO: FB

FIR against Yatnal for derogatory remarks

BAGALKOT, 1 MAY

An FIR was filed against Vijayapura MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal for allegedly making derogatory remarks about Minister Shivanand Patil during a public speech. The FIR was lodged in Bagalkot's Navnagar Police Station by labour inspector Ramesh Bhimappa Sindagi. This is the second legal action against Yatnal within a week. Yatnal's remarks were allegedly made during an open speech at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's programme held in Navanagar on 29 April. The complaint lodged by Sindagi on behalf of the government accuses Yatnal of inciting sectarian sentiments against Patil. Yatnal and his supporters were booked at Station Bazar police station in Kalaburagi on 22 April for hate speech against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.—***Salar News***

Mother, child's death sparks protests in Koppal

KOPPAL, 1 MAY

A woman and her unborn child died during delivery at Community Health Centre in Tavaregara village of Kustagi taluk in Koppal district. The woman's family members and villagers staged a protest on hospital premises citing medical negligence for the deaths. Lakshmi, 20, began experiencing labour pains on Monday night and was admitted to Government Community Health Centre in Tavaregara village during the early hours of Tuesday. Despite medical intervention, Lakshmi and her unborn child died on Tuesday evening.
—***Salar News***

Cancel Prajwal's diplomatic passport: CM

Siddaramaiah writes to PM; he also alleges Deve Gowda helped Prajwal flee India

BENGALURU/ YADGIR, 1 MAY

> **From Kaiserganj to Karnataka and from Unnao to Uttarakhand, Prime Minister's 'silent support' to the criminals of daughters is emboldening the criminals across the country. Is being part of Modi's 'political family' a 'guarantee of protection' for criminals** -Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing allegations of sexually abusing several women, used his diplomatic passport to travel abroad. He urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take swift action to cancel it.

In a letter to Modi, he asked Modi to take other steps such as using diplomatic and police channels of the Government of India as well as international police agencies to ensure the swift return of the "absconding" MP to face the full force of the law.

The 33-year-old Prajwal Revanna is the son of HD Deve Gowda's elder son HD Revanna, who is an MLA and a former minister.

Prajwal is BJP-JD(S) alliance's candidate from Hassan, which went to the polls on Friday.

Explicit video clips of Prajwal sexually abusing nearly 3,000 women had started making the rounds in Hassan, following which the State constituted a SIT to investigate the crime.

He said that while the SIT is working round the clock to investigate the allegations of crimes against several women by Prajwal, getting him back to the country is of utmost importance so that he faces investigation and trial as per the law of the land.

"In this regard, this is to urge you kindly to move the Ministries of External Affairs and Home Affairs to take swift action to cancel the diplomatic passport of Prajwal," he said in the letter.

The SIT of Karnataka will provide all the necessary details and fulfil all the legal formalities required in this regard, he added.

JD(S) on Tuesday suspended Prajwal Revanna from the party following the allegations.

'Deve Gowda sent grandson Prajwal abroad'

Siddaramaiah alleged that JD(S) Supremo Deve Gowda planned his grandson Prajwal's escape abroad amid the sex scandal controversy.

"Who gave him a visa, it is BJP only," Siddaramaiah said while addressing a rally in Devatkal in Yadgir.

Siddaramaiah also dismissed allegations against Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar that he was involved in the alleged leaking of pen drives.

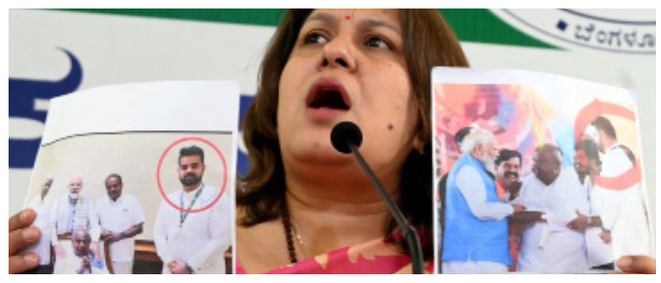
"Prajwal's driver said that the pen drive was given by a BJP leader but Kumaraswamy accuses Shivakumar of politics," the Chief Minister said.

"Why did Amit Shah give the ticket to him knowing about all this, why did they give a ticket to the accused of the sex scandal?" he added.

Meanwhile, Shivakumar said that If JD(S) and BJP leaders respect women, they should visit the victims. —*PTI*

What is a diplomatic passport?

They are given to MPs, ministers, diplomats and certain high-ranking government officials for their international travel or official duties. It grants the bearer certain privileges and immunities as they navigate international affairs. In India, the Ministry of External Affairs' Consular, Passport & Visa (CPV) Division issues them. These are Type D passports, which are different from normal passports. They have a maroon cover instead of regular dark blue one, and have validity of five years or less, depending on the position of the holder and nature of assignment. —*Salar News*



Supriya Srinate addressing a press meet regarding MP Prajwal Revanna issue, at Congress office on Wednesday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Modi knew, but campaigned for Prajwal: Supriya

BENGALURU,1 MAY

Congress Spokesperson Supriya Shrinate on Wednesday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi knew about alliance partner JD(S)' Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna's crime of sexually abusing women, and yet he appealed for votes for him.

Launching a scathing attack at a press conference, she showed photos of Modi with Prajwal.

Pointing to Prajwal's social media where he claims to be a part of "Modi Parivar", Congress spokesperson Shrinate alleged, "Not one, not two but 3,000 videos and several women have been raped. This is the biggest rape crime in the country's history."

"Within hours of SIT being constituted, he fled the country," she added. She said Union Home Minister Amit Shah always knows who goes where, and even if Priyanka Gandhi goes to meet her daughter.

"Modi knew exactly who this man (Prajwal) and what he had done because BJP leader Devaraje Gowda in December 2023 wrote mails and sent letters to Shah, JP Nadda (BJP President), Modi telling them about it and not to make him a candidate," she said. She also questioned the silence of Union Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani. —*PTI*

'Never got Devaraje's mail, letters about sex scandal'

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

Vijayendra Yediyurappa ***PHOTO: PTI***

BJP's State President Vijayendra Yediyurappa has said that BJP leader Devaraje Gowda's claim of sending a letter on the Prajwal Revanna videos to him is patently false.

Taking to his X handle, Vijayendra also claimed that he didn't have any information about the videos.

He also said Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar knew about the videos but waited for the elections to expose them to the public.

He added, "And, why take to the streets now when it is your government in the State and you have the power to order an investigation, take action? Why this drama?"

Earlier, while speaking with ANI, Devaraje said, "I wrote a letter to Vijayendra about the video and gave it to the office, but as he said, letter had not reached him." —*PTI*

Revanna finds remedy in rituals amid allegations

HOLENARASIPURA, 1 MAY

HD Revanna ***PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA***

Smoke billowed as 'Havan' (fire rituals) flames raged in the scorching summer at JD(S) MLA and former Minister HD Revanna's residence here on Wednesday.

Conspicuous was a piece of paper pasted on the wall of his house. Revanna said the SIT has pasted a notice on his house.

"I have the strength to face these conspiracies. I will face it (investigation). There is no need to bother. I did not do anything wrong. I am prepared for any investigation and will fight it in a legal manner," Revanna said.

Since morning, priests were busy performing rituals at Revanna's residence in Hassan district to "ward off the adversity" that has struck their family.

Revanna's trust in Gods, Goddesses, rituals and astrology are well known. —*PTI*

No question of protecting anyone: Parameshwara

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

G Parameshwara ***PHOTO: PTI***

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Wednesday said there is no question of protecting anyone including Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna. He said that action has been initiated in accordance with law by forming a Special Investigation Team (SIT).

He was reacting to Union Home Minister Amit Shah's statement on Tuesday wanting to know why Congress did not take any action against Prajwal.

SIT on Tuesday issued notice to Prajwal and his father HD Revanna, who have been booked for alleged sexual harassment, at the Holenarsipura police station in Hassan on 28 April based on a complaint by a woman who worked in their house, directing them to investigate.

He said, SIT was formed immediately by the state government and investigation has started. —*PTI*

LABOUR DAY

Labourers along with AITUC and other association members took out a rally to mark May Day in Bengaluru on Wednesday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Kharge in Yadgir: Modi hatao, desh bachao

YADGIR, 1 MAY

Mallikarjun Kharge ***PHOTO: PTI***

AICC Chief Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday called on voters to follow the slogan 'Modi Hatao, Desh Bachao' (Remove Modi, Save the Country), urging them to unite to save the Constitution and democracy in the country by electing Congress candidates in the Lok Sabha polls.

Kharge was addressing a public meeting here in favour of Congress candidates for the 7 May Lok Sabha polls, the second phase of polling in Karnataka.

Accusing Modi of inciting fights, Kharge said that while Modi "says Hindu-Muslim for everything, this (Yadgir) was a part of Nizam (Hyderabad) state. Hindus and Muslims have been together here and have celebrated each other's festivals together. Many Hindus here had Muslim names like Nawaz Reddy, among others."

While addressing a public meeting here, he said, "There were never fights (between communities) here. Modi has come to create a rift. Rift is being created by Modi between people who were living together trusting each other."

Congress has an intention to do a caste census in the country, Kharge said,"

"But, Modi is telling people that Congress wants to do an X-ray. He is saying that Congress wants to know about the extent of gold and land each family has. He is saying that even your 'mangalsutra' will be taken away and given to Muslims." —*PTI*

SHAH HOLDS ROADSHOW IN HAVERI

HAVERI, 1 MAY

The district headquarter town of Haveri turned saffron during Union Home Minister Amit Shah's road show held on Wednesday to campaign for the party's candidate ahead of the second phase of the Lok Sabha polls in State.

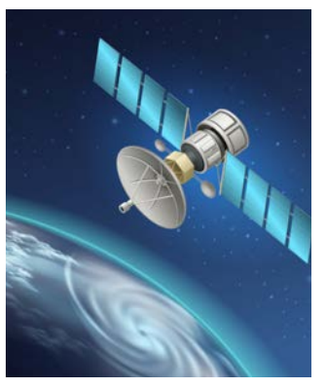
'Jai Sri Ram' and 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' slogans rent the air as large number of BJP and the JD(S) workers took part in the event.

While the BJP is contesting in 25 LS seats in Karnataka, its ally JD(S) is fighting the election in three seats. The BJP has also given ticket to former Prime Minister and JD(S) patriarch HD Deve Gowda's son-in-law CN Manjunath.

Holding the BJP and the JD(S) flags, the activists danced to the drum beats and raised slogans in favour of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Shah and former Chief Minister, Haveri candidate Basavaraj Bommai. —*PTI*

NewSpace India to handle all IRS satellite data

BENGALURU, 1 MAY



The NewSpace India Limited has said that it will handle all the Indian Remote Sensing satellite data and products.

It further said that Bhoonidhi will continue to be the data dissemination platform.

"From May 1, 2024, all commercial activities with respect to IRS satellite data and products would be handled by #NSIL while Bhoonidhi (shorturl.at/bPQ89) will continue to be the data dissemination platform," the NSIL said in a post on 'X' on Tuesday. "As per India's Space Policy 2023, satellite data of 5m and coarser is now free and open for all users. Data finer than 5m (except DEM, merged, mosaicked & customized products,etc) is open and free for Government Entities and priced for NGEs," it further said. —*PTI*

AVOID TAP WATER

City reports 1 cholera case; govt collects water samples

BENGALURU, 1 MAY

A 28-year-old labourer has been diagnosed with cholera and admitted to KC General Hospital in Malleswaram on Wednesday.

The City has seen a surge in cholera cases since March. Out of 49 cases reported in the State over the two months, 41 were reported in Bengaluru only. Of the 49 cases, 48 have been discharged, while one remains under medical care.

The Health Department is investigating the quality of drinking water in City, collecting samples from hostels, hospitals, parks and hotels.

BBMP has intensified health education campaigns to enhance public awareness about disease transmission and sanitation practices. Additionally, water samples have been collected for testing, with results awaited from the Public Health Institute Lab in the City.

- The Health Department is investigating the quality of drinking water in City, collecting samples from hostels, hospitals, parks and hotels

Due to the rising heat, there were concerns of typhoid and gastroenteritis in the City. State Public Health Officer attached to Health Department said: "There has been no spike in the typhoid and gastroenteritis cases in the government hospitals yet. We have collaborated with BWSSB to prevent further cases and zero bacterial treated water has been employed to reduce the risk of cholera, typhoid and gastroenteritis. Currently, we have taken samples from all the private establishments and the quality of water will be out soon."

Doctors are advising people to not consume water directly from taps, open wells, or untreated sources and also to avoid consuming raw or undercooked food.
—*Salar News*

49 cases reported in the State over two months ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

PHOTO: PTI

'Anupamaa' fame TV actor Rupali Ganguly join BJP

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

TV actor Rupali Ganguly, famous for her roles in TV serials, such as Sarabhai vs Sarabhai and 'Anupamaa', joined BJP here on Wednesday ahead of the third phase of the Lok Sabha elections. Along with Ganguly, Ameya Joshi, a social worker and astrologer from Maharashtra, also joined the BJP at the party headquarters in the presence of senior leaders including National General Secretary Vinod Tawde and national media department in-charge Anil Baluni. Addressing the press conference, both Ganguly and Joshi said they have joined the BJP to work for the progress of the country under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. *—PTI*

Plea in Delhi HC against deepfake videos during polls

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

A plea was mentioned before the Delhi High Court on Wednesday against circulation of deepfake videos during the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. A bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet PS Arora agreed to list the matter for hearing on Thursday, if the petition is in order. Senior advocate Jayant Mehta, while mentioning the plea for an urgent hearing, said it was being filed by a lawyers' body seeking directions to the Election Commission of India (ECI) to stop the circulation of deepfake videos during elections. Explaining the urgency, the lawyer said general elections are going on and deepfake videos are being circulated and they have also given a representation to the ECI. *—PTI*

2 ex-Cong MLAs quit after Delhi party chief quits

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

After the resignation of Delhi Pradesh Congress chief Arvinder Singh Lovely the Delhi unit of the Congress suffered a double jolt on Wednesday, two former MLAs Neeraj Basoya and Nasseb Singh resigned from the primary membership of the party putting the party's Lok Sabha preparations in doubt. In a letter addressed to Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, Nasseb Singh said, "Today, you have appointed Davinder Yadav as DPCC Chief. He as AICC (In-Charge Punjab) has run a campaign in Punjab solely based on attacking Arvind Keiriwal's false agenda and today, in Delhi he will be mandated to praise and support AAP and its Chief Arvind Kejriwal. On 28 April, Delhi Congress president Arvinder Singh Lovely resigned from his post.*—PTI*

Odisha CM declares assets worth ₹71 crore

BERHAMPUR, 1 MAY

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has declared assets valued at Rs 71.07 crore, up by over Rs 7 crore in the last five years, as mentioned in an affidavit filed by him in the Election Commission. The BJD chief had shown assets of Rs 63.87 crore in 2019. Patnaik on Tuesday filed his nomination papers for the Hinjili assembly segment to seek election for the sixth time along with the 64-page affidavit in which he mentioned movable assets of over Rs 14.05 crore and immovable properties worth Rs 57.02 crore. His movable assets include term deposits in various banks and post offices, while Rs 13.66-crore Naveen Niwas in Bhubaneswar and a Rs 43.35-crore house at APJ Abdul Kalam Road, New Delhi are among his immovable assets. *—PTI*

BJP Spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia says INDIA bloc is infected by a virus and the 'vaccine' for it is the country's citizens **PHOTO: PTI**

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addresses a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections, in Malda district on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

'Worried Oppn blaming EVMs'

Oppn afraid of NDA win: BJP

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Congress questioning the Election Commission (EC) for not releasing cumulative voter turnout figure reflects frustration and panic in the opposition as the NDA is set to win over 400 seats in the Lok Sabha elections, BJP said on Wednesday.

While Congress had on Tuesday taken a swipe at EC for the delay in releasing the figures, the poll watchdog later in the evening put out the overall figures for the two phases for which polls have been held so far.

BJP Spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said Opposition's INDIA bloc is infected by a virus and the "vaccine" for it is the country's citizens, whose verdict on 4 June will silence its leaders.

They will be seen nowhere, he said, claiming that people will reaffirm their trust in Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Noting that the Supreme Court recently rejected pleas seeking complete cross-verification of votes cast using EVMs with VVPAT, an independent vote verification system, Bhatia said the problem is not with the EC or the EVM but with the opposition.

He also accused the Opposition alliance for making communal statements.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge recently told a candidate at a rally that his name carried "Shiva" in it and he could take on Ram, Bhatia said, alleging that the opposition party was working to divide Hindus and unite Muslims.

—PTI

'BJP tampered with EVMs'

Turnout rise worrying: Didi

FARAKKA, 1MAY

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday criticised Election Commission (EC) for the "delay" in releasing the final voter turnout figures for the initial two phases of the Lok Sabha polls.

She also expressed concern over the sudden increase in polling percentages during those phases.

The commission made public the voter turnout of the first two phases of polling, which were held on 19 April and 26 April, on Tuesday evening.

According to the EC, a voter turnout of 66.14 per cent was recorded in the first and 66.71 per cent in the second phase of the ongoing Lok Sabha polls.

"The sudden jump in final voter turnout by nearly 5.75 per cent from what the Election Commission had released earlier is worrying. There are apprehensions of manipulation of results by the BJP as several EVMs were missing for a long period," she said while addressing a rally at Farakka in Murshidabad district.

The TMC Supremo stated that the sudden increase in poll percentage is not just "disturbing" but also raises "serious apprehensions about the credibility of EVMs".

"The details of EVM makers should be made public by the Election Commission as the BJP can stoop to any level to win elections," she said.

Voting for the general elections is being held in seven phases, with the remaining phases scheduled for 7 May, 13 May, 20 May, 25 May, and 1 June. *—PTI*

Shah video: Revanth seeks more time

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The legal counsels of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and four other leaders, who have been summoned by Delhi Police in connection with the 'deepfake video' case involving Union Home Minister Amit Shah, sought more time for appearance via email.

The counsels expressed the inability of their clients to comply with the Delhi Police summons in connection with the ongoing probe into the 'doctored' video.

It had issued a summons to Reddy and others as part of the ongoing inquiry into the circulation of an alleged fake video in which the Union Home Minister is purportedly heard saying that BJP stands against reservations.

However, BJP, thereafter, flagged the viral clip as fake and accused several Congress leaders in the South state of circulating it.

Earlier, the Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations (IFSO) unit of Delhi Police issued summons to 16 individuals across 7 to 8 states in connection with the case.

Also, Delhi police special cell has issued notice to Jharkhand Congress President Rajesh Thakur under Section 91 of the CrPC, asking him to present at the cell's office on 2 May in connection with the case.

—ANI

PHOTO: PTI

Man booked for sharing Shah's speech

Srinagar, 1 May

Police here have registered a case against a Budgam resident for allegedly sharing a fake video of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, officials said.

Following a complaint by BJP leader Altaf Thakur, a case was registered against Mohammad Ilyas Hussain Mir at Magam Police Station of Budgam.

—PTI

ECI BANS KCR FROM CAMPAIGNING FOR 48 HOURS

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Wednesday barred Bharat Rashtra Samithi president K Chandrashekar Rao from campaigning for 48 hours for his "objectionable" remarks against Congress.

The EC said his remarks at a press conference Sircilla on April 5 were violative of the provisions of the model code of conduct and its advisories. The 48-hour ban of the Telangana former chief minister comes into force at 8 pm on Wednesday.

After Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala, Rao is the second politician to be banned from campaigning for 48 hours in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

—ANI

TDP'S TRIPARTITE ALLIANCE MANIFESTO GIVES RS 1,500 PENSION TO WOMEN

AMRAVATI, 1 MAY

TDP-BJP-JSP alliance in Andhra Pradesh released its joint manifesto christened 'Praja Manifesto' for the upcoming polls in the state, promising to offer Rs 1,500 monthly pension to eligible women.

Addressing a press conference at Undavalli in Guntur on Tuesday, TDP national president N Chandrababu Naidu, JSP chief K Pawan Kalyan and Andhra Pradesh BJP in-charge Siddharth Nath Singh released the joint manifesto of the TDP and JSP.

"Rs 1,500 will be given to women in the state monthly. With this, they will additionally receive Rs 18,000 yearly, which is 90,000 in 5 years, apart from this there is free bus travel for women on RTC buses," the manifesto said.

"We will provide Rs 24,000 crore yearly to their families," it added.

The parties also said that through Thalliki Vandhanam, they will provide Rs 15,000 for every school-going child.

Keeping in view the increased prices of gas cylinders, the alliance shall help every household with 3 free gas cylinders, it added.

The three parties also promised to conduct a 'skill census' across the state. Janasena, TDP and BJP are NDA alliance partners in the southern state.

—PTI

PREZ IN AYODHYA

President Droupadi Murmu offers prayers at the Ram Temple, in Ayodhya, on Wednesday. Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Tirath Kshetra Trust said Congress' allegations of not inviting Murmu to the temple's consecration ceremony are "absolutely false and baseless" **PHOTO: PTI**

'NON-COOPERATION'

Kunal Ghosh lauds BJP, TMC removes him as general secy

KOLKATA, 1 MAY

Hours after Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Kunal Ghosh shared a stage with a BJP Lok Sabha candidate and praised him, TMC on Wednesday removed him from the post of state general secretary for making statements not aligning with the party.

Ghosh, who has been seeking more prominence for next-generation leaders, had expressed his desire to resign as party spokesperson and state general secretary in March.

The party then accepted his resignation as spokesperson but asked him to continue with the other post.

"Kunal Ghosh has been expressing views that don't align with the party... Ghosh was previously relieved from his role as party spokesperson. Now he has been removed from the position of general secretary of the state organization," TMC said in a statement.

In the statement signed by TMC Rajya Sabha party leader Derek O'Brien, the party also asked media outlets not to conflate Ghosh's views with those of the party, warning that doing so might invite legal action.

"It is important to clarify that these are his personal opinions.... Only statements issued from the AITC (All India Trinamool Congress) headquarters should be considered the official position of the party," it said.

Despite his removal from the post of party spokesperson, he has been holding press conferences regularly from the party headquarters during the ongoing Lok Sabha election campaign.

A senior TMC leader, speaking on the condition of anonymity, described Ghosh's removal as a "calibrated punishment," indicating that his removal as state spokesperson in March was a warning, and this removal as state general secretary is the final action.

Reacting to Ghosh's expulsion from his post, Ray said, "Whom they will suspend or expel is their internal matter. I have nothing to say about it. But it proves TMC doesn't believe in courtesy in politics."

Ghosh, considered close to TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, had kicked off a storm this year that the old guards in the party need to know when to step aside for the next generation. *—PTI*

AICC General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi during a rally in support of party candidate Rakibul Hussain, in Dhubri district on Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

Clear stance on 50% cap on reservation: Cong to PM

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Congress on Wednesday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to clear his stance on whether he will remove the 50 per cent cap on reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes.

Former Union minister Jairam Ramesh said Congress manifesto guarantees that it will pass a constitutional amendment to raise the 50 per cent cap on reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs but Modi is trying to give it a "communal colour".

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters here, he alleged that BJP is "talking about '400 paar' to get the right to change the Constitution as BJP and RSS are against secularism and social justice".

"Congress guarantees that it will pass a constitutional amendment to raise the 50 per cent cap on reservations for SCs, STs and OBCs," he said.

"I want to ask the Prime Minister, who wants to give a communal colour to our Nyay Patra and wants to mislead, that will he remove the cap of 50 pc reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs," Ramesh said.

He said Rahul Gandhi is holding a copy of the Constitution in his hand at public meetings because it is being attacked. *—PTI*

'Mafia raj' going on in Assam, says Priyanka Gandhi Vadra

Dhubri, 1 May

Alleging that a "mafia raj" was going on in Assam, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday claimed Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma was involved in multiple scams in the state. She claimed Sarma has a "secret understanding" with Badruddin Ajmal of the AIUDF just like BJP has with Assaduddin Owaisi in Telangana, both of which were aimed at defeating the Congress. *—PTI*

BALLOT TALES

Begusarai's Left have it tough

BEGUSARAI, 1 MAY

A strong presence of the Left had earned Begusarai the epithet "Leningrad of Bihar" but the Red brigade here is now grappling with the saffron surge.

BJP fielded Union Minister Giriraj Singh again from Begusarai, while CPI nominated Awadhesh Rai, as the united Opposition candidate in the seat where the situation has changed much compared to that in 2019.

The ideological drift was, perhaps, best witnessed in the watershed elections of 2014, when the seat was won by late Bhola Singh on a BJP ticket,

Giriraj Singh **PHOTO: PTI**

decades after he had begun his political career as an MLA of the CPI.

Five years later, with Singh no more, the BJP brought in here Giriraj Singh, an "outsider" who inflicted a crushing defeat on "local" Kanhaiya Kumar.

The electoral battle this time is not as eyeball-grabbing as it was in 2019, thanks to the electrifying presence of Kanhaiya Kumar, who had launched a spirited campaign, to which many celebrities had lent their heft.

The CPI debutant, who has since moved to Congress which has fielded him from Delhi North East, was badly hit by the RJD's decision to field its own candidate who cut into the anti-BJP votes, offering Giriraj Singh a victory on the platter, with a margin of over four lakh votes. *—PTI*

Nizamabad ryots want more

NIZAMABAD, 1 MAY

Ahead of polling in Nizamabad, farmers are demanding the establishment of the turmeric board in Nizamabad and an increase in MSP price on other crops.

A farmer from Ankapur village, Perkit Pedda Bhoomann expressed his concern, saying that farmers don't receive the amount of profit as compared to what they invest, resulting in less production, he said, adding that the farmers are shifting to paddy production.

"To farm an acre of turmeric the farmer is investing Rs 1.50 lakh and while we sell we are getting the same amount only

Farmer **PHOTO: PTI**

with not much profit. Farmers are producing less turmeric and shifting to paddy production. The turmeric board has not been allotted yet but the government said it will be done in phases. We have a large market here. We will vote for the party which supports and gives a subsidy to us on seeds of different crops," Bhoomann said.

Another farmer Ganga Reddy said that whoever will provide timely electricity and help farmers with fertilisers will receive support from the farmer community in the elections.

Further explaining the situation, he said that earlier there were 300 farmers, who cultivated turmeric but due to low profit many stopped the cultivation, resulting in a low production of turmeric, he said.

—PTI

Andhra man, four family members found dead

VIJAYAWADA, 1 MAY

Five members of a family including a financially struggling doctor were found dead in their home at Vijayawada, police said on Wednesday. While four were found with slash injuries, one hung to death, said Vijayawada East Deputy Commissioner of police (DCP) Adhiraj Singh Rana, adding that the bodies were discovered by them on Tuesday morning and suspected that the crime might have occurred on Monday night. D Srinivas, 40, was found hanging while his wife D Usha Rani, 38, two minor children--boy and a girl--and his mother D Ramanamma, 70, were found with their jugular veins slashed, police said. On Monday night, the doctor handed over his car keys to a neighbour, requesting him to pass them on to his brother. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Chopper scam: HC seeks CBI, ED stand on bail pleas

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The Delhi High Court has sought the stand of the CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation) and ED (Enforcement Directorate) on pleas by alleged middleman Christian Michel James seeking regular bail in the alleged Rs 3,600-crore AgustaWestland chopper scam cases relating to the purchase of 12 VVIP helicopters. Justice Jyoti Singh issued notices to the probe agencies on the bail applications by the British national, who was extradited from Dubai in December 2018 and was subsequently arrested for his role in the alleged scam. On 7 February last year, the court had denied bail to James, currently in judicial custody, while rejecting his submission that he be released on the grounds that he has completed half of the maximum sentence. *—PTI*

Jammu-Srinagar NH reopens after 2 days

BANIHAL/JAMMU, 1 MAY

The Jammu-Srinagar national highway was on Wednesday reopened for light motor vehicles (LMVs) after remaining closed for the past two days following multiple landslides triggered by heavy rains in Ramban district, officials said. Heavy motor vehicles are not allowed to ply on the highway for the time being as the road clearance and widening operation is still on, a traffic department official said. He said the LMVs were released on the highway from both sides around 9.30 am after debris were cleared at Mehar, Dalwas and Magerkote. The opening of the 270-km highway, the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country, provided relief to hundreds of people, including tourists, who were stranded in the twin capital cities. *—ANI*

J&K: Op to track down terrorists extends to Kathua

JAMMU, 1 MAY

Security agencies have widened the ambit of the search operation to Kathua district to track down two groups of terrorists involved in the killing of a village defence guard in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district. A village defence guard (VDG) was killed in a brief encounter with terrorists in remote Panara village in Chochru Gala heights early Sunday, following which a hunt was launched jointly by the police, army, and CRPF. The search operation, which entered the fourth day on Wednesday, is ongoing in Basantgarh, Bani and Seoj areas of Udhampur and Kathua districts, officials said, adding there has been no fresh contact with the fleeing terrorists. *—PTI*

Heat wave in WB, Odisha; Kerala, TN hope for rain

It is heat wave if maximum temperature hits above 40°C

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on Thursday has issued a red alert for Severe heatwave conditions in Gangetic West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, and Jharkhand for Wednesday and Thursday.

On Tuesday Kalaikunda, located in Gangetic West Bengal, recorded the highest temperature in the country at a sweltering 47.2 degrees Celsius.

As per a warning issued at 9.30 am on Wednesday the Met Department has said that heat wave to severe heat wave condition very likely to prevail in the districts of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Angul, Dhenkanal, Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Cuttack and Boudh.

Heat wave condition very likely to prevail in the districts of Deogarh, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Sonepur, Nuapada, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Khurda, Nayagarh, Malkangiri, , Nawarangpur, Gajapati, Rayagada.

A red alert has been issued for the district of interior Odisha for the next three days, starting Tuesday *PHOTO: ANI*

It further said that hot and humid weather condition very likely to prevail in the districts of Koraput, Puri, Ganjam.

According to the technical definition, it is considered to be a heat wave if maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40 degree Celsius or more for the plains and at least 30 degree or more for hilly regions.

According to the IMD strong surface winds (25-35 kmph) very likely to prevail over Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi for today.

Also a trough/wind discontinuity runs from southeast Madhya Pradesh to South Interior Karnataka in lower tropospheric levels and under its influence, isolated to scattered, light to moderate rainfall accompanied with thunderstorm and lightning very likely over Kerala and Mahe and Tamil Nadu during next 7 days and Lakshadweep today.

Yesterday, the lowest minimum temperature of 13.2 degree Celsius was reported at Amritsar.

Meanwhile, Odisha is reeling under intense heat as 30 cities reported more than 41 degrees and 29 cities recorded 42 degrees Celsius and above. Baripada, a town in the Mayurbhanj district, has recorded a scorching 46.4 degrees Celsius, while the coastal district of Balasore reached 46 degrees Celsius marking its all-time highest temperature in the last 10 years.

She also said that a red alert has been issued for the district of interior Odisha for the next three days starting from Tuesday.

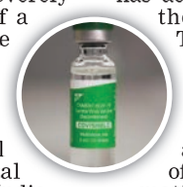
Mohanty advised people to take precautions, especially during peak hours from 11am to 4 pm. *—ANI*

Plea in SC wants experts to examine Covishield risks

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

An application was moved in Supreme Court on Wednesday seeking to issue direction to form a medical expert panel to examine Covishield vaccine side effects.

The plea has been moved by advocate Vishal Tiwari, who also urged the court to issue directions to the Centre to establish a vaccine damage payment system for the citizens who became severely disabled as a result of a vaccination drive during COVID.



In the plea, advocate Tiwari sought direction to constitute a medical expert panel comprising medical experts from the All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), Delhi headed by its director and supervised by the retired justice of Supreme Court of India, to examine the Covishield vaccine side effects and its risk factors.

The application also sought to issue directions to Centre to compensate the people who are severely disabled or died because of the side effects of Corona vaccine administered to them during COVID.In the application, advocate Tiwari mentioned the recent disclosure that the Covishield vaccine had caused and may cause side effects in rare cases, as its developer and pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca has said that its AZD1222 vaccine against COVID, which was made under licence in India as Covidshield, could cause low platelet counts and formation of blood clots in "very rare" cases. AstraZeneca has accepted a link between the vaccine and Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS), a medical condition characterised by abnormally low levels of platelets and the formation of blood clots. AstraZeneca's vaccine formula was licenced to Pune-based vaccine maker Serum Institute of India (SII) during the coronavirus pandemic for the manufacture of Covishield.

More than 175 crore doses of Covishield have been administered in India, Tiwari said. Tiwari said that after COVID-19, there has been an increase in the cases of death due to heart attacks and sudden collapse of people. *—ANI*

Kerala Mayor harassment row: Bus CCTV footage missing

T'PURAM, 1 MAY

Kerala police said on Wednesday that the memory card of the CCTV camera on the KSRTC bus, which was a vital evidence in the ongoing rift between the Thiruvananthapuram Mayor Arya Rajendran and the driver, is missing.

A team of police personnel from the Cantonment station here examined the superfast bus parked at the KSRTC depot here but failed to retrieve the memory card which was expected to be vital proof in the raging row.

The mayor and her family on Saturday night got into a heated argument with the KSRTC bus driver after blocking the vehicle at Palayam junction.

The mayor alleged that the driver made sexually suggestive gestures at them.

She claimed that the driver was rash and negligent, and they intervened after the bus was about to hit their car from behind.

Arya Rajendran *PHOTO: FB*

- A team of police personnel from the Cantonment station here examined the superfast bus parked at the KSRTC depot here but failed to retrieve the memory card which was expected to be vital proof in the raging row

The driver, HL Yadhu, however, had rejected the allegations levelled by her.

"A 64 GB memory card with the recorded visuals should have been there on the bus. There are three cameras inside the superfast bus. But the memory card is missing," a police officer told the media.

However, the driver said the camera had been operational throughout the journey and was working even after the controversial incident.

Meanwhile, Congress MLA M Vincent alleged that the memory card might have been taken away by the KSRTC authorities themselves.

"The bus has been under the custody of the KSRTC so far. The police are also acting to protect the real culprits. They have not even recorded the statements of the passengers in the bus," he alleged.

Vincent also alleged that the police had a clear directive from Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the Home Department to protect the mayor and her husband. *—PTI*

'SMART' ANTI-SUBMARINE MISSILE

The supersonic Missile-Assisted Release of Torpedo (SMART) system was successfully flight-tested, in Odisha coast on Wednesday. SMART is a next-generation missile-based lightweight torpedo delivery system for anti-submarine warfare. It carries an advanced lightweight torpedo as a payload along with a parachute-based release system *PHOTO: ANI*

NIA ARRESTS 8TH ACCUSED IN ₹700CR ATTARI DRUG CASE

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested another key accused in the Rs 700 crore Attari border drugs seizure case, taking the total number of arrests in the matter to eight.

An official statement issued on Wednesday said the accused, Athar Saeed alias Chacha, had handled the proceeds of the drugs on the directions of the kingpin, Shahid Ahmed. Saeed was arrested on Tuesday after the NIA teams searched his premises in Delhi's Daryaganj and seized incriminating documents.

The documents are being examined by the anti-terror agency to unravel the complete conspiracy behind the massive drugs racket, the statement said. Investigations revealed that Saeed was instrumental in creating and sustaining a network of hawala operators and others for the transfer of the money earned from the sale of the narcotics from India to Afghanistan and to the UAE.

He also played a critical role in helping the prime accused flee from the country, it said.

The case pertains to the recovery and seizure of 102.784 kgs of heroin valued at approximately Rs 700 crore by the Indian customs in two instalments in April 2022.

The drugs arrived from Afghanistan through the Integrated Check Post (ICP) Attari, Amritsar, and was concealed in a consignment of licorice roots (mulethi). *—PTI*

Girl raped at school hostel in Bhopal, SIT to probe

BHOPAL, 1 MAY

An eight-year-old girl studying in Class 2 at a private school in Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal was allegedly raped in its hostel, following which the police have registered a case against three unidentified people, officials said on Wednesday.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav ordered a probe by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) into the case, while the Opposition Congress targeted his government over the incident and demanded harshest punishment for the culprits.

The police said they were trying to ascertain when the incident exactly took place.

"An eight-year-old girl was allegedly raped at the girls' hostel of a city-based private school. Following a complaint in this regard, the police registered a case on Tuesday night against three people under Indian Penal Code (IPC) section 376 (rape) and provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act," Misrod police station in-charge Manish Raj Bhadoria said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Shraddha Tiwari said over phone that the accused are yet to be unidentified as the girl is not able to tell the police properly.

When asked about the allegation that the girl was drugged before the crime, he said all these things will be clear once the investigation gets over. *—PTI*

ELEPHANT KILLS WOMAN IN TN; 4TH DEATH IN 2 MONTHS

SATHYAMANGALAM, 1 MAY

A 45-year-old woman was trampled to death by a rogue elephant in Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR) in the fourth such death within two months, villagers said. Sundari of Jora Oosure village near Jeerahalli forest area under STR was returning home on Tuesday evening with her cattle in the forest area when a lone rogue elephant rushed at her, attacking her and trampling her, forest officials said.

She was seriously injured and managed to raise an alarm. On hearing her calls for help, the villagers rushed there, and the elephant ran into the forest. *—PTI*

CBI raids 10 states over crypto fraud

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation) has searched 30 locations across 10 states and Union Territories after registering a case in a fraudulent investment scheme linked to the HPZ Token App, officials said Wednesday.

The agency has alleged the scheme involved misleading the public to invest in non-existent crypto-currency mining machine rentals. The nationwide operation ended Tuesday night.

Two private companies, Shigoo Technology Private Limited and Lillian Technocab Private Limited, along with their directors were booked in the case under Indian Penal Code Sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy) 419, 420 (cheating) and Section 66 D of Information Technology Act, 2000, officials said.

The CBI seized digital devices, including laptops, mobile phones, ATM and debit cards besides a trove of email accounts, during the searches spread across Delhi-NCR, Jodhpur in Rajasthan, Mumbai in Maharashtra, Bengaluru in Karnataka as well as locations in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh. *—PTI*

IN KERALA

Man gets 3 life terms for raping daughter

T'PURAM, 1 MAY

A Kerala court has sentenced a man to three life terms for repeatedly sexually assaulting his six-year-old daughter in July last year.

Thiruvananthapuram Fast Track Special Court (FTSC) judge R Rekha sentenced the man to life imprisonment for each of the offences under sections 5(l) (penetrative sexual assault on a child repeatedly), 5(m) (penetrative sexual assault on a child below 12 years) and 5(n) (sexual assault of child by a relative through blood or adoption..) of the POCSO Act.

Confirming the sentence given to the man, Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) RS Vijay Mohan said on Tuesday that the father was also additionally sentenced to varying sentences under various provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) and the IPC for a total of 21 years.

Court also imposed a fine of Rs 90,000 on the father *PHOTO: PTI*

Besides that, the court also imposed a fine of Rs 90,000 on the 40-year-old father, the SPP said.

However, as the punishments have to be undergone concurrently, the man will serve a life sentence, the prosecutor said.

The court also said that a father who is supposed to protect his daughter has committed a heinous crime, according to the SPP.

It also observed that such an act can never be justified as through such a crime, the childhood of the victim has been lost. The incident occurred in July 2023 when the victim's mother was working in the Gulf region and the girl was living in her father and maternal grandmother's homes. *—PTI*

108 people died of tuberculosis in Mizoram in 2023

Aizawl, 1 May

A total of 108 people died of tuberculosis (TB) in Mizoram last year, officials said on Wednesday. Blood samples of 17,432 people were tested last year, and of them, 2,272 were found suffering from TB, they said. Of the 2,272 patients, 164 were diagnosed with multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB), they said, adding that 86 per cent of the patients were successfully treated, while 108 people died. Between January and March this year, a total of 595 people have been diagnosed with TB, out of the 3,761 samples tested. Of them, 38 were diagnosed with MDR-TB and 57 people were found suffering from both TB and HIV-AIDS. Of the patients, 6 per cent are diabetic, 33 per cent use tobacco and 16 per cent are alcoholic, they said. So far this year, the Aizawl district reported the highest number of TB cases at 433, followed by Kolasib district (46) and Lunglei district (34). West Mizoram's Mamit district recorded the least TB cases at five. *—PTI*

MAY DAY RALLY

Female workers take part in a May Day rally, marking International Labour Day in Lahore, Pakistan, on Wednesday. Participants of the rally demand implementation of labor laws and increase in their wages
PHOTO: PTI

India's economy: The good and bad in Modi's government

In January, thousands braved the freezing cold at Delhi's Red Fort to hear Prime Minister Narendra Modi speak.

His message was "Viksit Bharat 2047", a promise to make India a developed nation by 2047.

It's the latest catchphrase from a man known for his penchant for catchy taglines.

"Developed India" is an imprecise pledge, but in the 10 years since Mr Modi first stormed to power, he has been trying to lay the foundations for a period of economic boom.

Modi and his government inherited an economy that was teetering on the precipice. Growth was slowing and investor confidence was low. A dozen Indian billionaires had gone bankrupt, saddling the country's banks with enormous unpaid loans that had crippled their capacity to lend.

Now, 10 years on, India's growth is outpacing other major economies, its banks are strong, and the government's finances are stable despite a painful pandemic. India surpassed the UK as the fifth largest economy last year and according to analysts at Morgan Stanley, it's on track to overtake Japan and Germany and hit the third spot by 2027. There is undoubtedly an air of optimism in the country. It successfully hosted the G20, became the first to send a rocket near the Moon's South Pole, and has birthed a few dozen unicorns. The soaring stock markets have also had a trickle-down effect on the wealth of its middle class.

On the face of it "Modinomics" – BJP's economic vision for India - appears to be working. But dig deeper, and the picture is more complex. For a vast swathe of the country's 1.4 billion people who live on the margins of sustenance, it's not boom time just as yet.

10 years on, India's growth is outpacing other major economies ***PHOTO: PTI***

Digital revolution

Modi's push for digital governance has begun to transform the lives of some of the country's poorest people.

Today, Indians in the remotest corners of the country can buy many daily goods without cash, paying as little as 20p for a packet of bread using a QR code on their phone.

Underpinning this digital revolution is a three-layer system of governance, which includes universal identity cards, a payments infrastructure that enables click-of-a-button money transfer, and a data pillar that gives people access to crucial personal documents like tax returns.

Linking hundreds of millions of bank accounts to this "digital stack" has cut red tape and corruption.

Estimates suggest that up to March 2021, an equivalent of about 1.1% of GDP was saved due to digital governance, allowing the government to dole out a volley of social subsidies, cash handouts and also spend on infrastructure building, without running high deficits.

Jobs blues

In January, thousands gathered outside government recruitment centres in the northern city of Lucknow to go to Israel for jobs in the construction industry. The desperation of these workers showed India's jobs crisis is real. And it is crushing aspirations everywhere.

"I'm the first master's degree holder in my family," says Rukaiya Bepari, a 23-year-old graduate in the town of Miraj in western India.

"But there's no industry where I live. So I'm now taking tuitions. It doesn't pay much."

The share of educated youths among all unemployed people increased from 54.2% in 2000 to 65.7% in 2022 according to latest figures by the Indian Labour Organisation.

There's also been no significant growth of real wages in India since 2014,

Job creation is a problem Modi has been unable to solve.

Right off the back of his victory in 2014, Modi launched an ambitious Make In India campaign to turn India into the world's factory. In 2020, his government doled out $25bn in incentives to companies across sectors from semi-conductors to mobile electronics in order to enhance India's manufacturing capabilities.

Two speed recovery

At 3%, the growth in overall private consumption expenditure - the money people spend on buying things - is the slowest in 20 years.

And household debt has touched an all-time high, even as financial savings plunged to their lowest levels, according to new research.

"India's next decade could resemble China's path (of hyper growth) from 2007 through 2012," analysts from Morgan Stanley wrote in a widely discussed paper.

They add that the country has many advantages - a young demographic, the geopolitics of global de-risking from China and a clean-up of sectors like real estate. Other megatrends like digitalisation, a transition to clean energy and growth in global offshoring will propel future growth, say experts.

The infra push is also something that will have long-term payoffs. By making improvements in roads, power supply and turnaround time at ports - India is finally "creating an environment in which manufacturing can flourish", says DK Joshi, CRISIL's India economist.

Covid-19 dealt a major blow to students, who couldn't attend school for nearly two years. But the government has continued to underfund education, and healthcare.

In its first decade, Modinomics appears to have delivered for a select few. But for many the jar, as it appears, is still half empty.

—BBC News

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR ساڈا

Bird flu has been spreading among cows in US for months

Bird flu or H5N1, a strain of the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), has been spreading among cows in the United States for almost five months, new data indicated.

A primary genomic analysis revealed that the outbreak is likely to have started in December 2023 or early January. The first case of the strain jumping from wild birds was announced on 25 March, 2024. Since then, the H5N1 strain infected 34 herds in nine states of the US, according to reports.

H5N1 has infected millions of birds and animals over the years and may cause a global pandemic, health experts flagged.

The infection has been "silently spreading" among the US cattle, a report in the journal Nature showed. The undetected circulation of the virus is attributed to the lack of data about its origin and evolution, the authors noted.

Metadata such as each sample's precise data and state from where it was sourced are not available. The missing links prevent scientists from understanding how the virus may have been transmitted between cows and herds and identify exactly when the strain first jumped to cows.

Karthik Gangavarapu, a computational biologist with Scripps Research in La Jolla, California, who processed the data on the Sequence Read Archive (SRA), told Nature that a repository managed by the US National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) is said to have about 10 gigabytes of sequencing information from 239 animals. The samples are from animals such as cows, chickens and cats.

The infection has been silently spreading ***PHOTO: UNSPLASH***

- The first case of the strain jumping from wild birds was announced on 25 March, 2024. Since then, the H5N1 strain infected 34 herds in nine states of the US, according to reports

The pathogen isolated from infected cattle showed genetic diversity, implying that the virus has been evolving over months, said Martha Nelson, a genomic epidemiologist at NCBI in Bethesda, Maryland.

The scientists also found mutations in the viral-protein section, which indicates potential adaptation for spread among mammals.

Instances of the virus jumping back from infected cows to birds and cats were also noted, suggesting the possibility of a multi-host outbreak.

Earlier this month, a person with exposure to dairy cattle was reportedly infected with bird flu. But data showed that genome sequenced from infected person did not match the signature mutations observed in the cattle.

It opens up the possibility that the person was infected from an entirely different viral lineage, which has not yet been obtained from infected cattle, scientists claimed. Another possibility lies in the person directly catching infection from a wild bird, they added.

—Downtoearth

The missing links prevent scientists from understanding how virus may have been transmitted to cows
PHOTO: UNSPLASH

Bhool Garhi is a forgotten village after Hathras gangrape

Four years after the gangrape and death of a Dalit teen jolted the nation's consciousness, Bhool Garhi is a village forgotten, mired in neglect and the struggle for basics, the elections only a distant echo in the uneasy quiet of everyday life.

The 2020 incident of the 19-year-old woman who was brutally assaulted, allegedly by upper caste men in the village, and died two weeks later in a Delhi hospital has further polarised the village between Thakurs and SC community.

Cut off with no proper road access, leaving people to walk the last mile, Bhool Garhi - the name ironically translating to forgotten citadel -- is a small village, its primary occupants being 90 families of upper caste Thakurs and four Dalit families.

The four Dalit families, who mostly work in upper caste homes in the village, continue to do so. They live in hutments in the Dalit 'basti' on the outskirts of the village.

That three of the four upper caste men who were accused of the crime have returned home has added to the disquietude in the village.

The victim's family do not speak much and a CCTV continues to monitor movements.

For the residents of Bhool Garhi, the tragedy four years ago casts a long shadow but life has returned to the urgent concerns of life - rising prices, unemployment and the struggle for survival.

The death of the young woman was followed by a rushed cremation by the police without the consent of her family, further fuelling public outcry and demands for justice.

But those sounds of protest have receded into the distance. The brutal incident, which once brought national attention to the village, now lingers in the background.

"We were promised a home but just received one instalment of it and sanitation issues are very serious here as you can see," said a woman in the Dalit basti outside her home marooned in gutter water.

"My son is 30 years old, but without a job. I want him and his family to have a proper roof over their heads, away from this swamp," she said on the condition anonymity.

The Thakur community's area is better but marginally.

"We have better infrastructure, but sanitation remains a problem. The roads are broken but these can be sorted out," added Uma Shankar, a local Thakur resident.

With elections - Bhool Garhi falls in the Hathras parliamentary constituency - just days away on 7 May, there are but faint hopes that things will improve. The voices of the marginalised resonate with aspirations for a better tomorrow but the wheels of progress turn slowly.

The elections are only a distant echo in the uneasy quiet of everyday life in Bhool Garhi ***PHOTO: PTI***

Their political choices are as polarised as the society they live in. Most villagers in Thakur area said they would vote for BJP, primarily driven by Hindutva and construction of the Ram Mandir, those from Dalit basti remain loyal to BSP.

BJP has been winning in Hathras since 1991, except in 2009. Dalits and Thakurs form a largest part of the constituency followed by Brahmins.

Shankar said he would vote again for the BJP. The 2020 tragedy is in the past and they need to look ahead, he said, torn between wanting a leader who can bring jobs and control inflation and one that pushes the faith agenda.

"BJP is promoting Hindutva and built the Ram mandir. 'Aastha bahut zaroori hai humare liye (faith is very important for us)," Shankar, who owns land right outside the village, said.

As the political atmosphere heats up with impending elections, it is evident that the wounds of the past are secondary to the pressing realities of the present.

The return of the accused men has led to alarm but survival takes precedence over retribution, amongst Dalits.

"What can we do? They are back, and we have to live with it. Our lives have always been hard. We focus on getting by each day," said another Dalit basti resident.

Many in the Thakur community believe the accused are innocent and it was all a big "misunderstanding and mismanagement by the police".

There were many promises from politicians. And they too have faded into the background noise of rural life.

"We were in the news for a while, and then everyone moved on," said a relative of the Dalit teen.

"At the time, many politicians, including BJP leaders, came to meet us at that time but now we are a forgotten topic. No one cares."

The family, he said, received compensation from the government and is using that only to sustain themselves.

"Yes, our roads need repair, and our children need jobs but there is also a deep-seated distrust among communities here. Healing those wounds will take time," admitted the girl's relative.

While the villagers stumble along in their everyday lives, the politicians too are cautiously finding their way around issues.

"The 2020 incident shook the nation. We will bring the focus back to the women's safety," said SP's Valmiki.

"The agenda of the BJP is solely and exclusively development. The works of development carried out by Modi ji's government in the last 10 years are certainly our focus on development," BJP's Balmiki said.

Three of the accused in the 2020 case were acquitted due to lack of evidence, while one juvenile was held guilty and sentenced to three years in a reform home.

The young woman was allegedly dragged away by her dupatta around her neck, injuring her spinal cord. The violence left her paralysed with a severe spinal cord injury, resulting in her death.

—PTI

‘Action against students worrying’

The police cleared 30 to 40 people from inside Columbia University’s Hall

UNITED NATIONS/NEW YORK, 1 MAY

The UN’s top human rights official has voiced concern over “heavy-handed steps” taken to disperse and dismantle pro-Palestinian protests across university campuses in the US, just hours before the New York Police Department arrested and cleared protesters at the prestigious Columbia University.

Hundreds of police officers swept into Columbia University on Tuesday night to end the pro-Palestinian occupation of an administration building and sweep away a protest encampment, acting after the school’s president said there was no other way to ensure safety and restore order on campus. The police cleared 30 to 40 people from inside Columbia University’s Hamilton Hall late Tuesday after pro-Palestinian protesters occupied the administration building in New York earlier in the day. “Freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly are fundamental to society – particularly when there is sharp disagreement on major issues, as there are about the conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said on Tuesday. Turk said he was troubled by the “series of heavy-handed steps” taken to disperse and dismantle protests across university campuses in the US. Columbia University President Minouche Shafik, in a letter to the NYPD regarding the “unrest” on campus, said that a group of individuals had entered Hamilton Hall on campus for the “purpose of occupying the building”. *—PTI*

Hundreds of police officers swept into Columbia University on Tuesday night to end the pro-Palestinian occupation **PHOTO: PTI**

- The police cleared 30 to 40 people from inside Columbia University’s Hamilton Hall late Tuesday after pro-Palestinian protesters occupied the administration building in New York earlier in the day

Blinken in Israel to push for a cease-fire in Gaza

TEL AVIV, 1 MAY

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was meeting with Israeli leaders on Wednesday in his push for a cease-fire deal between Israel and Hamas, saying “the time is now” for an agreement that would free hostages and bring a pause in the nearly seven months of war in Gaza.

He has said Hamas would bear the blame for any failure to get a deal off the ground. Blinken is on his seventh visit to the region since the war erupted in October in his bid to secure what’s been an elusive deal between Israel and Hamas that could avert an Israeli incursion into the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are sheltering.

The current round of talks appears to be serious, but the sides remain far apart on one key issue — whether the war should end as part of an emerging deal. “We are determined to get a cease-fire that brings the hostages home and to get it now, and the only reason that that wouldn’t be achieved is because of Hamas,” Blinken told Israel’s ceremonial President Isaac Herzog at a meeting in Tel Aviv.

Antony Blinken **PHOTO: PTI**

As part of his visit, Blinken will meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. According to the State Department, he will also meet with the families of hostages and visit an Israeli port where aid for Gaza is entering.

But the United States has also criticized Israel for its plan to invade Rafah, Gaza’s southernmost city where some 1.5 million Palestinians are sheltering from fighting elsewhere, saying that any major offensive there would bring potential harm to civilians and should be avoided. *—AP*

HOUTHIS CLAIM ATTACK ON PORTUGUESE SHIP

JERUSALEM, 1 MAY

A Portuguese-flagged container ship came under attack by a drone in the far reaches of the Arabian Sea, corresponding with a claim by Yemen’s Houthi rebels that they assaulted the ship there, authorities saivd Tuesday.

The attack on the MSC Orion, occurring some 600 kilometres off the coast of Yemen, appeared to be the first confirmed deep-sea assault claimed by the Houthis since they began targeting ships in November. It suggests the Houthis — or potentially their main benefactor Iran — may have the ability to strike into the distances of the Indian Ocean as the rebels previously threatened in their ongoing campaign over Israel’s war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The attack happened last Friday, according to the Joint Maritime Information Centre, which operates as part of the US-led Combined Maritime Forces in the Mideast. After the attack, the crew discovered debris apparently from a drone on board, the centre said. The ship “sustained only minor damage and all crew on board are safe,” the centre said. Ship-tracking satellite data analysed by Associated Press put the container ship, bound for Salalah, Oman, in the area of the attack on Saturday.

The MSC Orion has been associated with London-based Zodiac Maritime, which is part of Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer’s Zodiac Group. It was operating on behalf of the Mediterranean Shipping Co, a Naples, Italy-based firm. Zodiac referred questions to MSC, which did not respond to a request for comment Tuesday. The Joint Maritime Information Centre assesses “that MSC Orion was likely targeted due to (its) perceived Israeli affiliation,” the centre said in a report. *—PTI*

Police clear protesters from Columbia Varsity Hall

NEW YORK, 1 MAY

The pro-Palestinian demonstration that paralysed Columbia University ended in dramatic fashion late Tuesday, with police carrying riot shields swarming the Ivy League campus, bursting into an administration building protester took over the previous night and making dozens of arrests.

Meanwhile, clashes broke out overnight between duelling groups at the encampment at the University of California, Los Angeles. Some were armed with large sticks and beat others with them.

Security was tightened Tuesday at the campus after officials said there were “physical altercations” between factions of protesters.

A statement released by a Columbia spokesperson said New York City officers entered the campus after the university requested help.

A tent encampment on the school’s grounds to protest the Israel-Hamas war was cleared, along with Hamilton Hall where a stream of officers used a ladder to climb through a second-floor window. Protesters seized the hall about 20 hours earlier.

“After the University learned overnight that Hamilton Hall had been occupied, vandalized, and blockaded, we were left with no choice,” the school said.

“The decision to reach out to the NYPD was in response to the actions of the protesters, not the cause they are championing. We have made it clear that the life of campus cannot be endlessly interrupted by protesters who violate the rules and the law.” *—PTI*

China highway collapse kills 24

BEIJING, 1 MAY

Twenty-four people have died after a section of a mountainside highway collapsed in China’s Guangdong province, following days of heavy rain.

Thirty others were taken to hospital after a 17.9m (58 feet) stretch of the Meilong expressway crumbled at 02:10 local time (19:10 BST) on Wednesday. Authorities have yet to state the cause of the incident. Images on state media showed a massive gash in the forested mountainside below the highway.

The 30 people in hospital are “not currently at risk”, state media report. The provincial government has dispatched 500 emergency response personnel to the scene. State media initially reported that 19 people had died but local authorities later said 24 people had been killed, with the number of injured persons still at 30.

Footage that appeared to have been taken shortly after the collapse showed flames and black smoke billowing from below the highway. A total of 20 vehicles fell into the collapsed portion of the road, authorities said.

Another video carried by state media showed a smoking pile of charred cars partially covered in mud. Guangdong, China’s most populous province, was hit with flash floods last week that killed four people and displaced 110,000 others.

30 people in hospital **PHOTO: WEIO**

The floods also damaged dozens of houses, shut schools and caused flight cancellations and delays. Authorities have estimated economic losses of 140.6m yuan ($19.4m; £15.5m). The wild weather continued over the weekend, when a tornado ravaged a factory district in the provincial capital of Guangzhou, killing five people and wounding 33 others. *—BBC News*

Russian missile attack claims 5 lives in Odesa

ODESA, 1 MAY

A Russian missile assault on the Black Sea port city of Odesa has left at least five individuals dead and more than 30 wounded, as confirmed by Ukrainian authorities, CNN reported.

A video footage, released by Ukraine’s Prosecutor General, captures the harrowing moment when numerous bomblets erupted in quick succession near the seafront, unleashing chaos and devastation.

Among the structures ravaged by the assault was an educational institution colloquially referred to as the “Harry Potter castle” due to its striking resemblance to the iconic Scottish architectural style. Images disseminated by officials depict the once-majestic cone-shaped towers and roof engulfed in flames, painting a sombre picture of the aftermath, as reported by CNN. According to Ukrainian authorities, the assault was orchestrated using an Iskander ballistic missile alongside cluster munitions, underscoring the brutality of the attack. Prosecutor General Andriy Kostin revealed the recovery of missile debris and metal fragments strewn across a wide radius, indicating the ferocity of the strike.

Among the structures ravaged by the assault was an educational institution colloquially referred to as Harry Potter castle **PHOTO: X/@ANDRIYKOSTINUA**

Tragically, among the injured were two children and a pregnant woman, underscoring the indiscriminate nature of the assault. Furthermore, the assault inflicted significant damage to nearly 20 residential buildings and critical infrastructure, compounding the already dire situation.

The utilisation of cluster munitions in the attack violates international norms outlined in the Convention on Cluster Munitions, a treaty aimed at curbing such atrocities. However, the absence of signatures from either side, including the United States, highlights the glaring gaps in enforcing such agreements. *—ANI*

SL PM to face his colleague in Prez polls

COLOMBO, 1 MAY

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe, if stood for re-election in the presidential poll due later in the year, may have a face-up with his cabinet colleague Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe, who is currently serving as the Minister of Justice.

Former president Maithripala Sirisena, the chairman of Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), told reporters on Wednesday that Rajapakshe, 65, would be his party’s candidate in the presidential election scheduled to be held before 15 November this year. “He will be the most suitable candidate from SLFP”, Sirisena said. Rajapakshe is a member of the now fragmented Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party, the home for members of the United People’s Freedom Alliance loyal to its former leader Mahinda Rajapaksa. A part of the SLPP is currently in alignment with 75-year-old Wickremesinghe while another section supports the main opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) -- a political alliance led by Leader of the Opposition Sajith Premadasa. Wickremesinghe, who is yet to announce his candidacy, is banking on cross-party support for his re-election to implement an economic reform programme to pull the country out of bankruptcy.

The main Opposition leader Sajith Premadasa and the Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) party leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake have already announced their candidature. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X/PTI

PAK TO BLOCK SIM CARDS OF TAX DEFAULTERS

ISLAMABAD, 1 MAY

Authorities in Pakistan have decided to block the mobile phone SIM cards of over half a million tax defaulters as part of the drive to take action against tax evaders.

The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) in an Income Tax General Order (ITGO) said the mobile SIMs of 506,671 individuals, who failed to file their tax returns for 2023, will stay blocked until restored by the FBR or the Commissioner Inland Revenue having authority over the person.

It ordered the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority and all telecom providers to immediately implement the Income Tax General Order no 01 of 2024 to block their SIMs and file a compliance report by 15 May. An official source said the FBR has identified 2.4 million potential taxpayers who did not exist on the tax rolls. Notices were subsequently issued to these individuals. The FBR has selected over 0.5 million individuals out of the 2.4 million for SIM blockade based on one criterion: they must have declared taxable income in one of the past three years and these individuals did not file their returns for tax year 2023. *—PTI*

PHONES IN DEMAND

Some businesses making money out of Taliban rule

KABUL, 1 MAY

Yunis Safi, a businessman in Kabul, knows very well the importance of showing off your phone if you want something done.

“In Afghanistan, your phone is your personality,” he said, smiling, a jewel-encrusted ring on each hand. One boasts an emerald, the other a fat Russian diamond. “When you go to a meeting with the government, the better your phone, the more they respect you.”

Safi runs a phone shop in the posh Shar-e-Naw neighbourhood. An armed guard stands outside. The iPhone 15 Pro Max adorns the shop shelves, retailing for USD 1,400. He has customers ready to part with this sum of money, which may come as a surprise to some given the country’s economic woes and more than half the population relying on humanitarian aid to survive.

There are 22.7 million active SIM cards in the country **PHOTO**: X@**A51FR3D**

Afghanistan’s finances were on shaky ground even before the Taliban seized power in 2021. But, even amid difficult conditions, some businesses are making money out of Taliban rule. Women are reduced to customers, however, as authorities have barred them from most jobs, including retail. None of Safi’s 78 staff are women.

He has tapped into a diverse consumer base — the ones hungry for the latest iPhone release and those happier with simple handsets, which make up the bulk of his sales and sell for between USD 20 and USD 200.

The Communications Ministry says 2 million new SIM cards have been issued in the past two years and that subscriber numbers are increasing. Ministry spokesperson Enayatullah Alokozai said the government was plowing USD 100 million into the telecom sector and had fully restored hundreds of towers. There are 22.7 million active SIM cards in a country of 41 million people. Of these, 10 million are for voice calls and the rest are for mobile internet. According to Trade Ministry figures, phone imports have risen. Last year, 1,895 tons of phones came into Afghanistan.

Safi has the iPhone 15 Pro Max, wears an Apple Watch Ultra and owns three cars. Business was bad immediately after the Taliban takeover but it’s improving, Safi said. “The people buying the new release iPhones are the ones with relatives abroad sending money to Afghanistan.”

Abdul Rahman Zirak, a senior official at the money exchange market, estimates that USD 10 million changes hands daily. The diaspora sends mostly US dollars to families, who exchange it for the Afghani. There used to be more ways to send money to Afghanistan before the Taliban seized control. But there are no more links to SWIFT or international banking and that’s a major reason why business is brisk at the market, he said.

“The work of money exchangers has increased and strengthened,” Zirak said. “Money transfers come from Canada, the US, Europe, Australia, Arab nations and other neighbouring countries.” *—PTI*

Workers across Asia, Europe hold May Day rallies

SEOUL, 1 MAY

Workers, activists and others in Asian capitals and European cities took to the streets on Wednesday to mark May Day with protests over rising prices and government labour polices and calls for greater labour rights. May Day, which falls on 1 May, is observed in many countries to celebrate workers’ rights. May Day events have also given many an opportunity to air general economic grievances or political demands. Police in Istanbul detained dozens of people who tried to reach the central Taksim Square in defiance of a government ban on marking Labour Day at the landmark location. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s government has long declared Taksim off-limits for rallies and demonstrations on security grounds, but some political parties and trade unions have vowed to march to the square, which holds symbolic value for labour unions. *—AP*

IS claims responsibility for bombing in Afg

ISLAMABAD, 1 MAY

The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for a deadly shooting this week targeting members of the country’s minority Shiite community inside a mosque in western Afghanistan that killed six people. The militant group said in a statement posted on its Telegram website late on Tuesday that one of its members attacked a “Shiite temple” in Herat province with machine-gun fire. The attack, which took place on Monday night in the district of Guzara, also left one person wounded. The attacker fled the scene. The Taliban Interior Ministry has said that an investigation is underway. Local media reported that the mosque’s imam was among those killed. *—AP*

China’s scientist who worked on Covid back in lab

BEIJING, 1 MAY

The first scientist to publish a sequence of the Covid virus in China said he was allowed back into his lab after he spent days locked outside, sitting in protest. Zhang Yongzhen wrote in an online post on Wednesday, just past midnight, that the medical center that hosts his lab had “tentatively agreed” to allow him and his team to return and continue their research for the time being. “Now, team members can enter and leave the laboratory freely,” Zhang wrote in a post on Weibo, a Chinese social media platform. He added that he is negotiating a plan to relocate the lab in a way that doesn’t disrupt his team’s work with the Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center, which hosts Zhang’s lab. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Indonesia volcano spreads panic, schools shut

MANADO, 1 MAY

Indonesia’s Mount Ruang volcano spewed more hot clouds on Wednesday after an eruption the previous day forced the closure of schools and airports, pelted villages with volcanic debris and prompted hundreds of people to flee. Seven airports, including Sam Ratulangi international airport in Manado, the capital of North Sulawesi province, remained closed after Tuesday’s eruption, the second in two weeks. Schools were shut to protect children from volcanic ash. The volcano is on tiny Ruang Island, part of the Sitaro islands chain. The Indonesian geological agency urged people to stay at least 7 kilometres (4 miles) from the volcano’s crater. It warned people on nearby Tagulandang Island, the closest to the volcano, of possible super-heated volcanic clouds from a further eruption and a tsunami. *—AP*

PHOTO: PTI

Petrol sales up 12.3 pc; diesel slides 2.3 pc

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

India's petrol consumption soared 12.3 per cent in April, but diesel sales continued to slide despite the country entering into hectic electioneering for general elections, preliminary data of state-owned firms showed on Wednesday. Petrol sales of three state-owned firms, which control 90 per cent of the fuel market, rose to 2.97 million tonnes in April compared to 2.65 million tonnes of consumption in the same period last year. Diesel demand dropped 2.3 per cent to 7 million tonnes. Demand for the nation's most consumed fuel had fallen 2.7 per cent in March. Petrol sales were up mostly due to an increase in the use of personal vehicles on the back of a price cut, crop harvesting season and the onset of summer. *—PTI*

Tata Motors gets tax demand of nearly Rs 25 crore

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Tata Motors Ltd on Wednesday said it has received a tax demand of nearly Rs 25 crore, including penalty and interest, from authorities on account of short payment of tax and excess availment of credit. An order was passed on 30 April, 2024, by the Sales Tax Officer Class II / AVTO Ward 204, Zone 11, Delhi and it was received on May 1, 2024, by the company confirming demand on account of short payment of tax and excess availment of credit under section 73 of the CGST/ SGST Act, 2017, Tata Motors Ltd said in a regulatory filing. The tax amount is Rs 14,25,68,173 with interest of Rs 9,14,15,704 and penalty of Rs 1,42,56,815. There is no material impact on financial and operational activities of the company on account of this order. *—PTI*

Coal India production rises 7 pc in April

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

State-owned CIL on Wednesday said its production increased 7.3 per cent to 61.8 million tonnes (MT) in April. The company had produced 57.6 MT of coal in the corresponding month of the previous fiscal, Coal India Ltd (CIL) said in a filing to the BSE. CIL accounts for over 80 per cent of domestic coal production. Coal offtake is the amount of dry fuel supplied from the pitheads. Of the 61.8 MT of coal produced by CIL last month, a maximum of 16 MT was produced by Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL) followed by 14.1 MT by South Eastern Coalfields (SECL) and 11.8 MT by Northern Coalfields Ltd among others. CIL's production increased 10 per cent to 773.6 MT in FY24. *—PTI*

Yes Bank gets GST demand of Rs 6.87 lakh penalty

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Yes Bank on Wednesday said it has received two GST demand orders, which levied a penalty of over Rs 6.87 lakh. The penalty levied by the Manipur and Punjab GST departments amounts to Rs 5.05 lakh and over Rs 1.81 lakh, respectively. "The bank has received two orders from the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Department, Manipur and Punjab...on April 30, 2024, raising demand for reversal of input tax credit (ITC) along with interest and levy of a penalty of Rs 5,05,940 and Rs 1,81,623, respectively," Yes Bank said in a regulatory filing. It said the tax and interest demand is below the material threshold limit currently applicable to the bank. "The bank does not expect any material impact on financial, operation or other activities of the bank due to the said orders," it said. *—PTI*

GST collection breaches Rs 2 lakh cr milestone

April revenues are at Rs 2.10L cr led by domestic transactions

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Goods and Services Tax collections grew 12.4 per cent to a record high of Rs 2.10 lakh crore in April, driven by increased domestic transactions and imports, raising expectations of next wave of GST reforms after the formation of the new government.

The finance ministry in a statement said that the GST collections breached the milestone of Rs 2 lakh crore in April, ministry said.

The GST revenue, which is basically taxes on goods sold and services rendered, was over Rs 1.78 lakh crore last month, while it was Rs 1.87 lakh crore in April 2023.

Central government settled Rs 50,307 crore to CGST and Rs 41,600 crore to SGST from the IGST collection. This translates to a total revenue of Rs 94,153 crore for CGST and Rs 95,138 crore for SGST in April 2024 after regular settlement.

Central government settled Rs 50,307 crore to CGST PHOTO: ANI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in a post on X (formerly Twitter) said: "There are no dues pending on account of IGST settlement to the states."

After accounting for refunds, the net GST revenue for April 2024 stood at Rs 1.92 lakh crore, reflecting an impressive 17.1 per cent growth compared to the number of the same period last year.

Deloitte India Partner Mahesh Jaising said the consistent buoyancy in GST collections has set the stage for pursuing forward thinking reforms under GST 2.0.

PwC india Partner Pratik Jain said with next wave of GST reforms expected after the formation of the new government, the growth (in GST collections) may be further accelerated.

It may also enable the government to take bolder decisions such as rate rationalisation or bringing products, such as ATF and natural gas, under GST ambit. *—PTI*

HIGHS & LOWS

Jet fuel price hiked, commercial LPG rate reduced

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Jet fuel or ATF price on Wednesday was hiked by a marginal 0.7 per cent while rates of commercial LPG used by establishments such as hotels and restaurants was cut by Rs 19 per cylinder in line with international prices.

Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price was hiked by Rs 749.25 per kilolitre, or 0.7 per cent, to Rs 101,642.88 per kl in the national capital, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. The increase reverses the marginal 0.5 per cent cut effected on 1 April. Rates in Mumbai on Wednesday were increased to Rs 95,173.70 per kl from Rs 94,466.41.

Prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes.

Alongside, oil firms also cut the price of commercial LPG by Rs 19 to Rs 1,745.50 for a 19-kg cylinder. Rates of the cooking gas used in domestic households, however, remained unchanged at Rs 803 per 14.2-kg cylinder.

1 April was the first reduction in commercial LPG prices since January.

State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) revise prices of ATF and cooking gas on 1st of every month based on the average price of benchmark international fuel and foreign exchange rate. *—PTI*

Sebi bans Manpasand Beverages and its 3 top officials for 3 years

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Markets regulator Sebi has barred Manpasand Beverages Ltd (MBL) and its three top officials from the securities markets for three years and imposed a penalty totalling Rs 68 lakh on them for manipulating and mis-stating the company's financial statement.

In its order, the regulator said that the financial statements of the company were manipulated and mis-stated for financial years 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Apart from Manpasand Beverages, those restrained by Sebi are -- the company's promoter, chairman & managing director (CMD) Dhirendra Singh, promoter and executive director Abhishek Singh and chief financial officer (CFO) Paresh Thakkar.

Also, these four entities have been fined Rs 17 lakh each,

which needs to be paid within 45 days, Sebi said in its 55-page order passed on Tuesday.

Additionally, Dhirendra Singh, Abhishek Singh and Paresh Thakkar have been prohibited from holding position of director or key managerial personnel in any listed public company or any intermediary registered with Sebi in any capacity for five years.

Further, the company's former independent directors -- Milind Babar and Chirag Doshi -- were fined Rs 2 lakh each and current independent directors --Nishish Mobar and Bharti Naik were fined Rs 1 lakh each. Naik was non-executive director at the relevant time.

In the report submitted to Sebi, the auditor pointed out various irregularities in the financial statements, which include purchases made from unregistered dealers without making payments; over-statement of purchases and sales, transactions with parties who had not filed GST returns making such transactions suspect; sales to suspicious entities, overstatement of impairments, receivables and fixed asset.

The regulator has not taken them into consideration while deciding on the allegations against the entities. *—PTI*

DUE TO TEMPERATURE RISE

Power consumption rises 11 pc in April

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

- The highest supply in a day (peak power demand) also rose to 224.18 GW in April 2024 as against to 215.88 GW in April 2023

India's power consumption rose around 11 per cent to 144.25 billion units (BU) in April as compared to the year-ago period, mainly due increase in temperatures.

In April 2023, the power consumption stood at 130.08 BU, a government data showed. The highest supply in a day (peak power demand) also rose to 224.18 GW in April 2024 as against to 215.88 GW in April 2023.

The power ministry has estimated around 260 GW of peak demand during summer. Experts said the increase in power consumption as well as growth in demand was mainly due to increase in temperatures and increased industrial activities in sectors like steel and power.

The demand for power as well as consumption will continue to see robust growth with the onset of summer, they said.

Peak demand touched 238.82 GW in August 2023, while it was 243.27 GW in September, 222.16 GW in October, 204.77 GW in November, 213.79 GW in December 2023, 223.51 GW in January 2024, and 222.72 GW in February 2024. *—PTI*

Maruti Suzuki's total sales increase 5 pc

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Automaker Maruti Suzuki India on Wednesday reported a 4.7 per cent increase in total sales at 1,68,089 units in April. The company had dispatched a total of 1,60,529 units to its dealers in the same month last year, Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) said in a statement. Total domestic passenger vehicle sales were 1,37,952 units compared to 1,37,320 units in the year-ago period. *—PTI*

Adani Energy Solutions ends FY24 on strong note

PHOTO: X /@ADANIONLINE

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Adani Energy Solutions Limited (AESL) has reported operational revenue at Rs 14,217 crore for the year ended March 31, up 17 per cent (year-on-year). According to the data released by the company on Tuesday, the revenue for the fourth quarter of 2023-24 grew by 17.4 percent YoY to Rs 3,560 crore.

Coming to the company's net profit, it declined 6.7 per cent during the entire year to 1195 crore and declined by 13.3 percent in the fourth quarter to Rs 381 crore.

The company attributed the revenue growth to the contribution from the newly operationalized transmission assets, commissioning of elements at North Karanpura and MP-II package lines and an increase in the units sold because of higher energy consumption in the distribution business at Mumbai and Mundra.

Earnings Before Interest Tax Depreciation and Amortisation for the Adani Group company grew 2.4 percent YoY to Rs 1,565 crore for Q4FY24. Anil Sardana, the managing director of the Adani Energy Solutions said that an ESG score of 25.3 from Sustainalytics in their recent assessment placed the company to be one of the amongst top 20 electric utilities and helped surpass global industry averages.

During the year, it received contracts of 21 million metres from Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, and Uttarakhand discoms (power distribution companies).

The company operationalised 1,244 circuit km during the year and ended with a total transmission network of 20,509 circuit km. *—ANI*

This will further strengthen economic ties PHOTO: UNSPLASH

India, Nigeria agree on local currency settlement

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

India and Nigeria have agreed to an early conclusion of a local currency settlement system agreement to further strengthen economic ties between the two countries.

According to the department of commerce, a seven-member delegation from India led by Additional Secretary in the commerce ministry Amardeep Singh Bhatia visited Abuja, Nigeria for the second session of India-Nigeria Joint Trade Committee (JTC) on April 29-30. It was held after a gap of five years.

Both sides have identified several focus areas to enhance bilateral trade and mutually beneficial investments.

The sectors include crude oil, natural gas, pharmaceuticals, unified payments interface (UPI), local currency settlement system, power and renewable energy, agriculture and food processing, education, transport, railway, aviation, and MSMEs development.

IIndia's main exports to Nigeria include machinery and instruments, drugs, pharma and fine chemicals, transport equipment, electronic goods, and manufacture of metals. Imports mainly include petroleum, crude and products, non-ferrous metals, wood and wood products, and cashew nuts. *—PTI*

Foreign portfolio investors turn net sellers in stocks

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have turned net sellers in Indian stocks in April, after remaining net buyers in the two preceding months, as the ongoing geopolitical crisis in the Middle East coupled with strength US bond yield likely pushed investors to take money off their portfolios.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), who continued to remain net buyers for the third month until a fortnight ago, have cumulatively sold stocks worth Rs 8,671 crore, the latest data from National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) showed.

They had aggressively sold Indian stocks and turned net sellers in the Indian equity market in January 2024, before turning net buyers thereafter. In February and March, they were net buyers. Firm GDP growth forecasts, inflation at manageable levels, political stability at the central government level, and signs that the central bank is done with tightening its monetary policy have all contributed to painting a bright picture for the Indian economy.

The foreign portfolio sold aggressively in January after making a beeline to accumulate domestic stocks during the prior two months--November and December. In December, they accumulated stocks worth Rs 66,135 crore. In November, the FPI inflow was Rs 9,001 crore, NSDL data showed.

The strong inflow of funds from foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) had then supported the benchmark stock indices to march towards all-time highs.

Before November, FPI participation in Indian stocks was lukewarm, and they had turned net sellers. They sold Rs 14,768 crore and Rs 24,548 crore in September and October, respectively.

Before that, FPIs bought Indian stocks worth Rs 7,936 crore, Rs 11,631 crore, Rs 43,838 crore, Rs 47,148 crore, Rs 46,618 crore, and Rs 12,262 crore in March, April, May, June, July, and August respectively, data showed. *—PTI*

FOR WELFARE SCHEMES

Govt bought 196L tonne wheat this year, higher than usual demand

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The government has bought over 196 lakh tonne of wheat so far in the ongoing 2024-25 marketing year, surpassing its annual requirement of 186 lakh tonne for all welfare schemes including the NThe Centre had procured 261.97 lakh tonne of wheat in the 2023-24 marketing year (April-March). The bulk of procurement is done during April-May.

As per the Union Agriculture Ministry estimates, production of wheat is seen at 1,120.19 lakh (112 million) tonne in the 2023-24 crop year (July-June) as compared to 1,105.54 lakh (110.5 million) tonne in the preceding year. There are chances of output reaching around 1,150 lakh (115 million) tonne on higher yields than expected in some states.

FCI has procured wheat worth Rs 45,000 crore from 16 lakh farmers from various states at MSP PHOTO: ANI

According to sources, the FCI has procured wheat worth Rs 45,000 crore from nearly 16 lakh farmers from various states at MSP. The arrivals of wheat crops currently in Punjab and Haryana are good.

Sources said, the FCI might extend procurement operations in a few states like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, before May as it expects late arrivals of crops in the mandies. The idea is to have surplus stocks to launch Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) if needed to control prices. Last year, over 100 lakh tonne were offloaded to flour millers and other wheat-based industries under this scheme.

The FCI has also relaxed quality norms in many states including MP to ensure farmers get minimum support price (MSP) for their crops.

This could be because of a combination of various factors including a shift in area to pulses, buying by traders at farm gate and farmers holding the grains for better realisation.

Procurement in wheat so far in MP has reached 34.66 lakh tonne as against 55.59 lakh tonne in the corresponding period of the previous year.

Regarding the buffer stock, the Centre had 75.02 lakh tonne of wheat in the central pool as on April 1, 2024, as against the buffer norm of 74.6 lakh tonne on that date. The buffer norm for July 1 is 275.8 lakh tonne.

In case of rice, the official said the situation is very comfortable as the FCI expects to procure 540 lakh tonnes in the 2023-24 marketing year (October-September) as against the annual requirement of 400 lakh tonne for all the welfare schemes.

To provide relief to the common man, the Centre has so far sold 5.6 lakh tonne of 'Bharat rice', which is being sold at a subsidised rate of Rs 29 per kg. Around 9.6 lakh tonnes of wheat have been lifted so far to convert into 'Bharat Atta' being sold at Rs 27.50 per kg. *—PTI*

Smith left out of Australia T20 World Cup squad

SYDNEY, 1 MAY

Former captain Steve Smith has been left out of Australia's squad for June's T20 World Cup in the Caribbean and USA. The 34-year-old's exclusion comes after a poor run of form against New Zealand in February, when he made scores of 11 and four. Promising batter Jake Fraser-McGurk has also been omitted, all-rounder Mitchell Marsh will captain the side and veteran opening batter David Warner has been selected for what could be his final international tournament. "Ultimately the balance of the final 15 needs to provide the best chance of being successful in this campaign," said selection chief George Bailey. Bailey added there had been "long conversations" about whether to include Smith in the side and said he would be keeping a close eye on Fraser-McGurk, 22, who has been in fine form for the Delhi Capitals in the Indian Premier League.—*BBC News*

Dhiraj aims for team qualification at Paris Olympics

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

Dhiraj Bommadevara, the only Indian archer to qualify for the individual event of the Paris Olympics, says locking a quota in the team events at the quadrennial extravaganza is next on their radar. The 22-year-old recurve archer qualified for the Summer Games in the men's individual event owing to his silver medal at the Asian Qualifying Tournament in Bangkok last year. "We are trying hard to convert the individual quota into a team quota, so we are working consistently towards it, planning for it and taking part in as many tournaments as possible," Dhiraj was quoted as saying in a SAI release. "Our first priority is to get the team quota. We will go to Paris 2024 with a simple mindset just to give our best." —*PTI*

Group C: India lose to Indonesia 1-4, finish 2nd

CHENGDU, 1 MAY

Defending champions India lost to powerhouse Indonesia 1-4 and failed to top their group in the Thomas Cup badminton tournament on Wednesday. Both India and Indonesia have already qualified for the quarterfinals of the prestigious event after winning their first two matches but the latter will progress to the knockouts as Group C toppers. The rematch of the 2022 Thomas Cup final provided Indonesia with a chance to exact revenge for their 0-3 loss in the title clash of the last edition to the same opponents, and they did just that on the back of a clinical display. In the final match, which was a dead rubber, Kidmabi Srikanth lost to Chico Aura Dwi Wardoyo. —*PTI*

AIFF disciplinary committee suspends Armando

NEW DELHI, 1 MAY

The All India Football Federation's disciplinary committee has handed out a suspension of two matches, with an additional suspended sentence of another two games, to Mohun Bagan Super Giant player Armando Sadiku for making offensive gestures in the technical area during their ISL match against Odisha FC in Bhubaneshwar on April 23. Sadiku violated Article 51 of the apex body's disciplinary code. He has also been sanctioned Rs 50,000 for his current recorded offence. The MBSG footballer from Albania was found in breach of Article 51 of the code due to his offensive gestures in the technical area against a match official, following his second yellow card (automatic red) in the 67th minute of the match. —*PTI*

Real Madrid and Bayern Munich players celebrate after scoring in the first leg of UEFA champions league Semi-final in Bayern Munich on Wednesday
PHOTO: X/@REALMADRID AND @CHAMPIONSLEAGUE

TODAY'S MATCH

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD vs RAJASTHAN ROYALS

Time: 7.30 pm
Where To Watch:
Jio Cinema, Star Sports Network

Stadium: Rajiv Gandhi Stadium, Hyderabad

SF leg 1: Viní Jr leads Madrid to 2-2 draw

The contest is open ahead of the return leg

MUNICH, 1 MAY

Real Madrid has made an art form of striking when least expected. Vinícius Júnior scored twice for Real Madrid to draw 2-2 at Bayern Munich in the first leg of their Champions League semifinal on Tuesday.

The contest is still wide open ahead of the return leg in Madrid on 8 May. With the focus on England stars Harry Kane and Jude Bellingham, as well as Toni Kroos' return to his former team, Vinícius emerged as the decisive figure on a night when his bright green boots were often a blur.

Bayern totally dominated the opening stages on Tuesday. Sané had an effort saved by Andriy Lunin in the first minute and the hosts went on to miss a slew of chances.

Kroos spotted Vinícius' run and played a perfect through ball for the Brazilian to sweep the visitors' first real chance past Manuel Neuer in the Bayern goal.

Bayern lost its early zest as the visitors saw more of the ball. Tuchel gesticulated wildly at his players to push forward, then threw his arms up in exasperation.

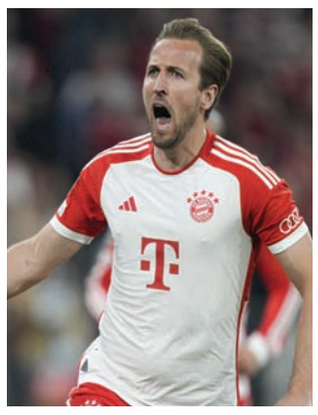
Sané equalised in the 53rd when he ran at the Madrid defence and cut inside Ferland Mendy before firing a fierce strike just inside the near post.

Kane made it 2-1 four minutes later with a penalty awarded after Lucas Vázquez bundled over Musiala. But it wasn't the last penalty as Kim Min-jae — who was beaten on Vinícius' first goal —brought down Rodrygo. Vinícius duly equalised from the spot.

"I think it's a good result," said Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti, who led Bayern to the Bundesliga title in 2017. "It gives us faith and confidence for the second leg. It's completely open."

Kane's goal, another penalty, was the England forward's 43rd goal in 43 games for Bayern this season.

"Madrid does this to teams, so we should not be too disappointed," Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel said. "I think we will be able to create chances in the Bernabéu," he said. "It felt like the goals were scored when the other team was better," Kroos said. "We're pretty sure that we'll advance at home." —*AP*



Goal scorrers Madrid's Vini Jr and Bayern's Harry Kane celebrate
PHOTO:X

SRH seek perfect chase against RR

HYDERABAD, 1 MAY

An erratic Sunrisers Hyderabad would look to fix their chasing troubles and get their campaign back on track when they host the high-flying Rajasthan Royals in the Indian Premier League here on Thursday.

A lot more is at stake for the Sunrisers than the Royals, who have virtually qualified for the playoffs. In ominous form till few days back, SRH dropped out of the top four on the points table after suffering back-to-back losses against wooden spooners Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Chennai Super Kings where they failed to chase down totals.

With five wins and four losses, the 2016 champions sit on the fifth spot with 10 points. The Pat Cummins-led side's top and middle-order batters have failed collectively while chasing, forcing head coach Daniel Vettori to admit that the idea of going all out with the bat in the second innings might not be the right thing to do.

SRH have breached the 250-run mark thrice this season but all while batting first. In contrast, they haven't managed to chase a total in excess of 200 even once. "We have been successful setting totals and now we have to look at how well we are in chasing," head coach Vettori had conceded after the loss to RCB.

"We're pretty well-suited to chasing, but it hasn't really come off yet. So yeah, it is something (we need) to work on," skipper Cummins had said after he loss to CSK. SRH are too dependent on the explosive starts provided by Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma. And, while the duo gets going it's great but when they flop, SRH will want to do a better job at re-building their innings. It's also about time Aiden Markram steps up and justifies his spot in the playing XI, having had an underwhelming season thus far. —*PTI*

Pandya, MI players fined Rs 24 lakh

Lucknow, 1 May

Mumbai Indians captain Hardik Pandya has vbeen fined Rs 24 lakh after his team's second slow over-rate offence in the Indian Premier League during their match against Lucknow Super Giants here. All the other players, including the Impact Player, were each individually fined either Rs 6 lakh or 25 per cent of their respective match fees, whichever is lesser. MI lost the match by four wickets at the Ekana Stadium on Tuesday. —*PTI*

Red Bull confirms exit of design chief Newey

NEW YORK, 1 MAY

Red Bull have confirmed their design chief Adrian Newey will leave the team in early 2025.

Newey, regarded as the greatest designer in the history of Formula 1, told Red Bull last week he wanted to leave in the wake of the controversy involving allegations about team principal Christian Horner. The 65-year-old's next team has not been decided but Ferrari are hot favourites to sign him. Horner said Newey leaves Red Bull "a true legend" and credits him for "all of our greatest moments from the past 20 years". "His exceptional ability to conceptualise beyond F1, his remarkable vtalent for embracing change and finding the most rewarding areas of the rules to focus on, and his relentless will to win have helped Red Bull become a greater force than even the late Dietrich Mateschitz might have imagined," Horner said.

Sources close to the situation have told BBC Sport there will be time for Newey to have a major impact on the gestation of a 2026 car design for whichever team he decides to join. Italy's Gazzetta dello Sport reported on Wednesday that Newey had met Ferrari team principal Frederic Vasseur in London to discuss a potential deal. Asked for a comment by BBC Sport, Vasseur said: "I have nothing to say." Newey has been at Red Bull since 2005 and has overseen two dominant eras with the team - from 2010-14 when they won four consecutive drivers' and constructors' titles with Sebastian Vettel, and the current era with Max Verstappen.

—*BBC News*

Adrian Newey ***PHOTO: X@REDBULL***

CHAMPIONS TROPHY

PCB asks ICC to schedule India's matches in 1 city

ISLAMABAD, 1 MAY

Pakistan cricket authorities have suggested the International Cricket Council to schedule India's qualifying round matches only in one city during the Champions Trophy next year. The Pakistan Cricket Board, slated to host the upcoming edition of the Champions Trophy in 2025, has picked three cities in Karachi, Rawalpindi and Lahore, which also gets the final, as venues to organise the tournament. "The ICC general manager Wasim Khan also recently visited Lahore where he discussed the CT arrangements with the PCB top brass and it was suggested that the Indian team's travel itinerary be kept to a minimum," a PCB source informed.

The source added that India could play its initial qualifying round games at Karachi before proceeding to the other venues for the knockouts. With their cricket engagements restricted only to ICC tournaments, the Indian cricket team has not played in Pakistan since 2008.

Last year, the Indian cricket board did not send the national team for the Asia Cup which was eventually held in Pakistan and Sri Lanka in a hybrid model. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PCB

HAPPY THAT THE TITLE IS FINALLY OUT, SAYS GRANDMASTER R VAISHALI

Chennai, 1 May

A Grandmaster much before the title was officially bestowed on her by FIDE recently, Indian chess player R Vaishali has revealed that there was a time she was unsure of being able to achieve the feat but managed to pull through owing to a good support structure.

Vaishali completed the requisite 2,500 ELO points Llobregat Open tournament in Spain to become only the third Indian woman after Koneru Humpy and Harika Dronavalli to become a GM. However, the title was officially given to her only recently following the FIDE Council meeting during the Candidates Tournament in Toronto last month.

"After completing the (Women's GM) title, I knew it would be changed to GM someday. I did not think about the title so much," she told PTI in an interview.

"Yeah, it took some time to get it official, but I'm happy that the title is finally out. I was okay with it (the delay)," she added. —*PTI*

MADRID OPEN

Nadal gets emotional after his loss, Rublev reaches QF

MADRID, 1 MAY

Rafael Nadal had to pause for a few moments, visibly emotional, while addressing the crowd after his loss in the fourth round at the Madrid Open.

As chants of "Rafa, Rafa, Rafa" echoed around, the five-time champion in Madrid made a farewell speech following a 7-5, 6-4 loss Tuesday to the 31st-ranked Jiri Lehecka. It was likely his last official match at the tournament in the Spanish capital.

"This is a difficult day when it arrives, but it's a reality. My body and my life had been sending me signs for some time," Nadal said.

"I was able to say goodbye playing on this court, one of the most emotional ones for me. Madrid at times has been more important to me than a Grand Slam. The memories here will stay with me forever."

After the match, tournament organizers unfurled five banners for each of Nadal's titles in Madrid — 2005, 10, '13, 14 and '17. They also showed a video of his highlights, as his wife and sister shed tears in the stands.

Nadal had not lost to a player ranked outside the top 20 on clay since falling to Pablo Cuevas in 2016 at Rio de Janeiro. He was seeking his 60th win in Madrid and the 100th ATP 1000 quarterfinal of his career.

Earlier, the player who Spanish fans hope will take over Nadal's reign, Carlos Alcaraz, needed nearly three hours to beat Jan-Lennard Struff 6-3, 6-7 (5), 7-6 (4).

Both Spaniards are coming off injuries and are trying to get back in shape ahead of next month's French Open. The 20-year-old Alcaraz missed tournaments in Monte Carlo and Barcelona. Nadal was coming off two matches in Barcelona after not playing competitively in nearly three months.

Top-seeded Jannick Sinner defeated 16th-seeded Karen Khachanov 5-7, 6-3, 6-3 to reach the Madrid quarterfinals for the first time. He is the only player to make it to the quarterfinals at all four ATP 1000 events this season.

Swiatek rallies

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek rallied for a 4-6, 6-0, 6-2 win over Beatriz Haddad Maia to reach the semifinals for a second straight year.

After letting a 4-1 lead slip to drop the first set, Swiatek regained control in the second and third sets. She will next face 18th-seeded American Madison Keys, who overcame eighth-seeded Ons Jabeur 0-6, 7-5, 6-1 after losing the first eight games of the match.

Rafael Nadal and Spain's Carlos Alcaraz in action during the match on Wednesday
PHOTO: X/ @MUTUAMADRIDOPEN

Bopanna-Ebden pair knocked out of the clash

Madrid, 1 May

Top-seeded Indo-Australian pair of Rohan Bopanna and Mathew Ebden bowed out of the ATP Mutua Madrid Open after a shocking first-round loss to the unheralded duo of Sebastian Korda and Jordan Thompson here. Bopanna and Ebden, who are the reigning Australian Open men's doubles champions, went down 7-6 (4) 7-5 in a contest that lasted one hour and 17 minutes. Squaring off for the first time, the American-Australian duo matched Bopanna and Ebden shot for shot. Korda and Thompson displayed a strong service game and saved the lone break point they conceded in the opening set. —*PTI*

Medvedev advances

Third-seeded Daniil Medvedev was given the run around by Alexander Bublik before winning 7-6 (3), 6-4 to advance into a match against Lehecka.

"A lot of drop shots, and I got so tired in the end running for them," Medvedev said.

"That's when you lose your concentration and you start to play a bit worse. But after the match he told me he was dead also. So, good for me, at least I was not the only one." —*AP*